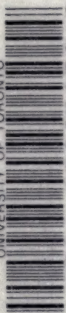


My Life of Adventure

A. G. Hales

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



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MY LIFE OF ADVENTURE

By Aabel

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Reconstructing a movement of enemy troops from aerial reports.
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MY LIFE OF ADVENTURE

By Alfred Hamwood
A. G. HALES

Author of the famous "McGlusky" Series

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DEDICATION

THIS book is dedicated lovingly to Trooper Walter P. Hales, at time of writing serving in the ranks of the New Zealand Mounted Rifles somewhere in Palestine. We have travelled and fought side by side in many a strange country, blazed many a trail together ; no father ever bred a better son, no soldier or pioneer will ever find truer comrade. It is no fault of mine I am not riding knee to knee with you now against the enemy of the world's freedom. If you live to see this book, it is well ; if you fall, it is well also ; destiny and duty go hand in hand. If we do not meet again here, laddie, we will blaze some fresh trails beyond the shadows, for *this* is only a wee bit of life ; we will find each other on the other side of the Veil. This is but a wee tribute for all your goodness. Ride straight, shoot straight, and help to keep the glory of the Anzac name ablaze like a good soldier, and—the rest is in the hands of the gods.

Your Dad,
A. G. H.



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CHAPTER I

MY BOYHOOD'S DAYS

ALMOST everything depends upon the start a boy gets in life. I got a splendid start. My father, a grim, dour pioneer, led me one evening by the ear to the slip panel that divided our cabin home from the wattle and gum tree-covered lands beyond and gave me my choice—either to be kicked over or under the slip panel. I am not sure to this day whether I went over or under, but I went—most everything went when the ‘dear old man’ kicked. He was a wonderful footballer wasted. It was a rapid start in life, and I had earned it. I have read in the Bible that the Prodigal Son when he had wasted what his father had given him went back for more ; he would not have done that if he’d had *my* father. I did not go back for more—there was nothing greedy about me—and when I had stopped running I did not sit down and turn things over—I couldn’t. It was weeks before I took any real pleasure in sitting down, and the spasmodic

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meals that came my way at that period I took standing up. Our neighbours were few and far between, but they did not get up a petition asking the 'old man' to take me back. I have been told since that those amongst them who were endowed with the gift of prayer went down on their knees that night and thanked God for His mercies, especially those who had orchards, and those who were in the habit of letting their riding hacks stray in search of grass amongst the gum trees, and those who owned hunting dogs.

Looking back on those far-off days, I cannot honestly say I think I was a really bad boy, but the love of fun and mischief was ingrained in my being. I had to travel a good many miles to school, and generally had to find a new way home every night. Folks on my line of march were so fond of me that they used to follow me home, and the things they said to my dear old mother for bringing me into the world reflected more credit on their powers of oratory than on her maternal wisdom. She used to tell me I would bring her grey hairs with sorrow to the grave, but as she did not die until she was nearly eighty the memory of those pathetic speeches does not keep me awake at night at present.

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We were a large family, and my brothers and sisters were eminently staid, respectable God-fearing folk, with a strong bias towards religion. They used to get a lot of joy out of revival meetings ; so did I, but we took our pleasures differently. My eldest brother was a preacher, and the pleasure he got out of expounding the ' Word ' at soul-sifting gatherings was remarkable. With the strange fatuity of motherhood, the mater fondly hoped and believed to her dying day that I also would some day get a ' call ' and go forth to let light into the heathen. I've done it too—with a rifle. Those revival meetings, held in the moonlight out under the gnarled branches of the great gum trees, are amongst my sweetest memories. The congregations were always of both sexes—the men weather bitten, hard, stern, rude of speech, rough of garb, hard workers to a man ; for drones could not get a living in the Australia of the pioneer days. Laziness was the one unforgivable crime. A person might be many things that were undesirable, but if he were a good worker much was forgiven him. Industry covered a multitude of sins. The elderly women were patient of expression. Young as I was, I knew

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that other things besides years brought the deep lines to the matrons' faces—crops swept away by fires, herds killed off by drought, children carried off by fever, and the eternal battle against adversity for daily bread were all factors that I was familiar with. They were a great breed, fit to be the forerunners of a mighty nation, and the foundation they left will not be wiped out for centuries. The young men were tough and strong; the girls winsome and bonny. My feet have wandered up and down the earth a lot since boyhood, but nowhere have I seen a people as sound, as brave, or as dauntless under difficulties as the Australians, and their co-partners in nationhood, the New Zealanders. It is when they are hard pressed that their best qualities come to the fore, for indomitable pluck is the God's gift to the sons and daughters of the Southern Cross. The women are braver than the men—more loyal, more level headed, and more forgiving. May the virtues of the mothers, not the sins of the fathers, be the heritage!

There were no playhouses, no picture shows, and very few pleasures of any kind in the times I write of; therefore, when a good revivalist preacher

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came along with his lungs full of oratory, the folks used to take their gladness out in that way. As soon as the advent of a 'Gospel Word Spinner' was heralded, everybody began to practise hymns. They did not favour sad ones much; something that savoured of battle or storm or of shipwreck suited that fighting breed best. Every kind of musical instrument known to the harmonic sciences, and some that were not, were pressed into service—from a flute to a banjo, from a jews' harp to a German concertina, from a cornet to a fiddle. They may not have kept very good time or tune, but they made a joyful noise before the Lord, and paved the way for prayer and preaching. To have the gift of prayer was considered a special sign of grace, and mighty was he among the chosen who could hold forth for an hour without calling on his second wind. Let me try and picture the scene. A cleared space of brown earth baked hard by the sun, flanked on one side by a mass of wattles in full bloom, the wondrous wealth of perfume permeating the air with nature's incense, the yellow balls of bloom glinting like minted gold in the moonlight. On the other side of the clearing the big gums, rough and unbeautiful,

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lifting their gaunt arms skyward; and on those limbs boys sitting astride seeking grace—and other things. The people come trooping in; the day's work is over, the hasty supper has been eaten. Some are sad and solemn of mien, others gay and garrulous. The married women met and talked, as matrons do the world over, of their families and their household cares; the men smoked and talked of work, of crops and cattle, horses and sheep; the young folk flirted. Suddenly a fine old man upreared himself, his silver white hair falling like foam down his neck over the collar of his coarse coat. There is an instantaneous hush, for this is a good man, a soldier who has proved his mettle in the battle of life for many a year. His clean-shaven face is very handsome in a massive way; it is the face of a thinker, and his voice when he speaks betrays the scholar. A man fit for any city in the world, yet strangely at home here in God Almighty's cathedral out under the silver stars that dot the blue-black sky. His words are few, simple and homely; his voice musical as melody itself. Even the boys on the gum tree boughs are awed, his noble sincerity hushes their turbulent hearts to stillness. He soon comes to an end,

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and Paul Smith, the bow-legged horse-breaker, announces the number of a hymn. In a moment the jews' harps, German concertinas, flutes and fiddles leap to life in a riot of sound that makes the 'possums in the trees wonder if this is judgment day, or only a beanfeast. Voices old and young, cracked and sound, musical and raucous, catch hold of the hymn and tear it, rip it, growl it, wail it, quaver it and toss it skyward. It is a favourite—'Sweeping through the gates of the New Jerusalem, Washed in the Blood of the Lamb—of the L-a-m-b.' Tilly Grey, the soprano, chases her top note way up above the old gum trees' topmost boughs ; and Billy Jordan, ex-prize-fighter, but now bricklayers' labourer, struggles after Tilly with his shivered tenor, but before they are half through the first verse he is three laps behind, and hopelessly winded. The rest are everywhere and nowhere, they sing hard and hang on grimly ; but when Tilly Grey is out for blood it takes a train whistle in good order to make her stretch herself. But though distanced and outpaced they are happy : little Tom Taylor, the baker, who has a bass voice that would make a fog horn sound mellow, tries to outflank Tilly and thunders into her sky-scraping higher

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octave, but she shuts her eyes and soars away. The congregation gets warm, feet stamp the hard dry earth in time to the melody, pale care-worn faces flush, dim eyes glitter, grey hairs escape from confining combs and flutter over poor skinny withered necks; it is the religious mania waking under the spell of music, which, in spite of all that neurotics may say to the contrary, is one of the strongest forces living even to-day. The hymn draws to a close; Tilly Grey lets herself go in one grand final flourish and soars away into the blue-black night until we boys straddling the boughs look up and wonder what will happen if that lovely but untrained top note of hers hits a star—will it bring down angels or a shower of rain? Those who love Tilly vote for angels, those who don't whisper about the discomforts of getting wet. It is the critical moment in the revival service, the moment we boys love and long for, for after the singing will come extempore prayer, and that will be meat and drink and a picnic thrown in for us, for we know by past experience that at revival meetings many an old score is wiped off, many a debt paid. From the earliest days the rule at such gatherings had been that whosoever felt moved by the spirit had

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to pray, and there was never any lack of movement. Many ears strained to catch the final trill in Tilly's voice, and nine men were 'moved' to let loose the flood-gates of their souls, but Amos Reid won by a gasp.—'Let's pray.'—His thin falsetto voice, piercing as a woman's in pain, rose above all other sounds, and every boy hugged himself, for Amos had an asp's venom under his tongue and, being a liar and a coward to boot, always took the opportunity of saying under the cloak of religion the things he dared not ventilate at the bar of the 'Maid and Magpie' public-house, or anywhere else where a nasty knobby fist might end his oratory. 'Oh, Lord, hear me! I'm a worm, a poor miserable human worm.' 'Amen to that; let's sing hymn number——' It was the voice of Jimmy Edwards, the postman, intervening, for he was Amos's deadly enemy; but Amos would not be denied, he went on with his prayer. 'Lord, save all here—even the worst of us!' 'Amen,' and many gasping sighs. 'We are none of us perfect, no, not one; an', Loard, if any of us goin' from house to house on our daily duties forget that we air married an' have a quiverful of children, which we don't look after as we ought, forgive us

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in Thy mercy !' This was a nasty shot at the postman, whose eldest boy had just been put into seclusion by the State for nine months for selling a heifer he had forgotten to purchase. The boy had told the Judge the heifer had chased him until he *had* to sell it in self-defence. But the postman was not the man to take things lying down ; he waited until Amos Reid paused for breath, and before the wind came *he* jumped in and improved the shining hour—' Lord, hear me,' he shouted—and it was not his fault if the Lord did not, for he shouted at the top of his voice, and it was not a small voice—' We are met here to-night to pray for the slanderer an' the coward, for the man who lends money to the widow with one hand an' takes it out o' her crops an' herds with both fists full to overflowing. If there is one such here to-night, soften his flinty heart that the fatherless little ones may not drink of the cup of tears ; do not cut him off in his sin ; give him time to repent and disgorge his ill-gotten gains, for he can't take the bank-notes he has accumulated where he is going when he dies, unless he has 'em printed on asbestos. Amen.' This was a deadly home thrust at Amos Reid, who was the only usurer in the district.

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Just then Dick Thomas was moved by the Spirit, and he wailed, 'From pomps and vanities save us all, an' keep us safe from neighbours who come like a thief in the night an' change our fat an' healthy young turkeys an' leave lean ones sufferin' from the croup in their place; may the Spirit move 'em to come to the mercy seat to-night an' own up to their evil ways, an' change back the turkeys afore Satan comes to claim his own! Amen.'

Every one not busy praying in silence for himself or herself looked hard at Barney Abrahams, but Barney being a hardened sinner never turned a hair, and he remarked afterwards in the bar of the 'Maid and Magpie' that the man who couldn't pray better than that didn't ought to try and raise turkeys. The white-haired preacher rose and made a sweet and simple prayer full of gracious dignity. He did not call himself a worm, because he wasn't a liar. I can see him now as I saw him then, the moonlight falling on his beautiful hair transforming it to a silver halo, a giant strong in his simple faith.

Tilly Grey burst into song again, and everything that could make a sound followed suit, the shrill tenor and the bass trying to beat her, or as Dicky

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Ellis, the unregenerate son of the sporting publican, whispered to me, they tried dashed hard to trump her ace and failed.

But all the praying was not like that I have mentioned; there were many real Christians in that rough-hewn throng, men who would have scorned to use the mantle of holiness as a bravo uses a cloak, to hide the steel he stabs with. This good kind lifted their strong, true faces to the skies, and prayed from their souls; sometimes their phraseology was quaint, but He who fashioned the mountains between His finger and thumb, dwelt in their hearts, and we boys were awed to silence when such men loosed the flood-gates of their souls. Trust a boy and a dog to know by instinct the ring of true worth from the base in a man's voice; years *may* bring astuteness, but the instincts of boyhood are almost unerring. Old Man Weir upraised himself very slowly, with an air of reverent calm. The moonlight falling upon his homely face showed plainly the cruel scars etched in by trouble in the battle of life, yet peace that passeth all understanding was graven on every lineament. It was the face of one who walked with angels seven days a week—no six-day

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devil worshipper and one-day saint ever looked as that old pioneer did as he knocked with the fingers of his soul at the gates of God. He did not ask for rain out of season, or for sunshine when rain was due, neither did he ask for riches or ease on earth, or a bandmaster's part for himself in the heavenly orchestra when his time should come to turn his brave old face to the wall. He gave thanks for mercies given, and real gratitude vibrated through every homely word, though we youngsters who knew how hard his lot in life was, wondered with the crude wonderment of youth what he had received that should make him grateful. We knew he had toiled early and late, and had his cup of sorrows filled until it bubbled over; but dear Old Man Weir knew, and his knowledge was graven in his face in lines that were eloquent of a soul at peace with God and man. He asked for courage in hours of weakness and temptation; he pleaded for guidance in the paths of honour, truth and manliness, and sat down amid a hush that was in itself a benediction.

Then Will Whipcord sprang up, a true Christian this, but of a different mould to gentle, loving, tender-hearted Old Man Weir. How he came by his

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nickname I never knew ; what his real name might have been was a mystery the settlement never solved. Rough as an untamed steer, the mightiest axeman amongst the men who felled and split trees for a livelihood, honest as a watch-dog, scorning to owe aught to any man for goods or gear, preferring at all times to go without the things he could not pay for on the nail, intolerant of weakness or meanness, but helpful to man or beast in trouble. He had followed the sea and a good many other ways of making a livelihood before he settled down to make a crust in our settlement, and we knew that originally he had come from Devon, and he made us realize how and why the Spaniards could make no headway against Drake o' Devon and his bully men. Rumour had it that Will Whipcord had been a wild blade before the Gospel lamp fell at his feet to light him on his way. He was beloved of all the youth near and far, for his Christianity was of a rugged cult that the wildest colts understood. If he saw two youths bent on quarrelling he would say, ' Naw dirty talk, lads, a foul tongue is an abomination to th' Lord ; if ye won't shake hands and be friends, off wi' jackets an' at it like men. Settle y'r squabbles once an' f'r aye. If

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there be a lass at th' bottom o' th' trouble, an' there mostly is wi' cubs, she'll most surely laugh at th' pair o' ye an' take up wi' a third.' Then he'd hold both jackets and see fair play, and at the finish nearly always send the pair away good friends. But woe to any full-grown man who tried to set any two youths fighting, or any two men either, if Will Whipcord was round, for in our parts there never was seen a fighter or wrestler like the Devon giant. My own dear father had been a pupil of Nat Langham's, the only man who ever beat Tom Sayers, and he used to say that wherever Will Whipcord learnt his fighting, he learnt it from a master. Yet, able as he was, he never abused his strength and skill. Only once did I see him thrash a man mercilessly, and that was when Sam Oswald the horse-breaker, a big man and reputed a terrible fighter, had slandered a decent widow woman shamefully. Will went to him as he stood in the bar of a public-house amid a half-dozen of his cronies, gave him the lie in his teeth, and a backhanded blow over his cowardly mouth, and told him to come outside and measure himself with a man. Sam went, and to the day his roan stallion killed him in Burrow's paddock, he never forgot

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what he got; or if he did he had a mighty bad memory. Yet no one thought of hinting that Will Whipcord was not a true and sincere Christian, because he hammered the grace of God into a malinger of women. I know my own stern old father's opinion of that matter, for I heard him say to my mother: 'God Almighty will mark that up to Will's account on the right side of the slate. Maybe it will offset some little sidestep he may have made in his youth.' And mother said; 'Thank God for such men, they are the salt of the earth.'

When the Spirit moved Will to pray at 'meeting,' he prayed as he fought, and as he worked. There was a splendid rush and spring in his words, but he never lost control of himself, and he never took advantage of the time and position to hit any one below the belt. I think if Drake had prayed before he went to struggle with the odds against him when the Spanish Armada came questing conquest, he would have prayed much as this Devon giant prayed. 'Make *men* of us, O Lord; teach us to tame the wilderness and take the rough ways with the smooth; teach us to bear our own troubles in silence and take the hardest knocks with a smile;

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give us hearts of oak for our own sorrows, but soften our hearts for the sorrows of others ; make us merciful to our beasts, tender to children who are fatherless, helpful in prayer and in pocket to the widow in affliction. Teach us to play the great game greatly. Amen.'

As Will flung himself back into his seat Long McNulty unwound himself. He always sat like a coiled spring. A man full of sly humour, who went through life doing good by stealth, poking fun at all things on earth. He had an income that came to him from overseas, which was a burden to him until he had given the greater part away. He lent money without usury, refusing interest of any kind. He was the only man in the colony who could make Will Whipcord strain himself to the uttermost in a wrestling match, yet his long figure was so thin Will used to say he looked like a 'length o' cord wi' knots in it.' 'When he stands square on I can grip him, but when he stands on edge there's nothing to grip, he's like an eel split down the middle,' Will used to aver, yet the two men were sworn friends. Even at meeting, Long McNulty could not curb his sly Scotch humour, and we loved him ; good cause

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we had to, for he had saved most of us many a time from well deserved punishment.

'Lord,' the canny Scotch voice would purr, 'Lord, some ha' approachit Thy throne th' nicht, sayin' they air worms. A'm no' sorry; Thou lovest th' truth, though perhaps they didn'a mean it, but th' truth wull pop oot in odd corners even when a mon preten's he's leein'. There be ithers wha ask Thee tae alter Thy almanac tae gie them weather suitable ta their ain idleness; they wad ha' rain i' midsummer because they didn'a clean th' drain ta their dams last winter. Eef they iver get ta Hades they'll be askin' f'r ice f'r their heads an' wonnerin' why they iver grumbled at winter on this Thy gude earth. Gie us wha' in Thy judgment it is gude f'r us ta hae, an' mak' us a' truly thankfu' we dinna get wha' we deserve. A'm no' a worm though A ken A'm built like yin; A'm no' a brand pluckit frae th' burnin'. A'm mair like a splinter than a brand. A'm a mon thankfu' f'r mercies gied ma, an' knowin' Thy lovin' kindness A'm hopin' an' prayin' f'r mair. Amen.'

The rude orchestra, frayed fiddle and cracked flute, jews' harp, battered cornet and concertina, leap to life; it's a fierce duel between the cornet

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and the flute, with the fiddle screaming in the middle distance and the jews' harp twanging its insistent note in between like a cricket thrumming its eternal monotone on a hot, sleepless night, and the concertina wailing dismally seven long laps behind, but always managing to butt into the chorus—then silence.

Next came the sermon from the new evangelist, an American, who knew so much about hell that Dicky Ellis ventured the opinion that he must have lived there some time ; but he was a powerful speaker and knew how to touch heart-strings, and when in ringing tones he called those who felt convicted of sin to the penitent seat, quite a lot of folks obeyed the call. Personally, I was very keen to go up and be converted ; my dear mother gave me an encouraging nod, but I caught my father's eye and fell back, for I knew he held the opinion that nothing but shoe leather would reach my real feelings.

Getting converted was the one great joy of my life at this period. The conversion always lasted till the meeting was over and the singing had ceased, but the decline and fall was always rapid. I 'went up' about twelve times altogether. The

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first time every one rejoiced and made much of me as a youthful brand plucked from the burning. I might have been permanently saved if on the way home Bill Brown had not accused me of stealing his kangaroo dog to go hunting with next day. I fell from grace under the accusation, and in falling fell on Bill, and his father, being a deacon, refused to have me in the fold. The second and third time I went up every one looked suspicious, and those who had kangaroo dogs with them held them tight. The third time I went forward most of the men near the mercy seat unbuckled their leather belts, and Tilly Grey, who was a good sort, whispered to me to find a circuitous way home—and I did, though it was no fault of mine that every blessed dog in the neighbourhood that loved 'possum hunting would forsake a square meal any time to follow me. Possibly mischief came naturally to me, but we had very little outlet for our animal spirits in those days. There were then no cricket, football, or other amusements; we went to work early and worked late, and school did not last very long. The youngsters of to-day have a gorgeous time compared to the life the sons of pioneers had; but one or two joys we had which they can

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never get. On moonlight nights I used to struggle out lugging an ancient 'Queen Bess' musket, a weapon so heavy that few men to-day would care to shoulder it about for a night. A walnut could almost be dropped down the muzzle of that old 'Brown Bess,' and when she did go off, which was at most uncertain periods, the 'kick' used usually to land me in a sitting position, and, more than once, the 'jump' of the old gun gave me a bad black eye and a bruised jowl; but that was part of the game. It was on only rare occasions that I got permission to go out with the gun, but I got out far oftener than any one was aware of. It was the dear old madre's habit to come to each of our beds to see that we were tucked in comfortably before she retired for the night, and when she came I was usually snoring lustily; but if the moon was at the full my window would open gently when all was quiet, and gun on shoulder I would be off amongst the big gum trees. Mooning 'possums is a fascinating pastime. You creep gently from tree to tree, with three or four dogs, and you get the tree between you and the rays of the moon; then you can see the 'possums away up on the topmost branches feeding amongst the leaves. When you 'moon'

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them properly, they look for all the world like big silver balls, for the fine deep grey fur gleams like polished metal. To balance the old gun with its great length and weight used to give me all my work; then the touch on the trigger, the roar of the miniature cannon, the flash of the fire from the coarse black powder, the recoil and the fall—but the 'possum nearly always fell too, and the dogs did the rest, and the skins used to pay for the powder. Then the leg-weary crawl home in the cold grey dawn, the hiding of the gun and the skins, and the heavy sleep of a few hours' duration before the early call to breakfast, and afterwards the invented explanations of the cause of the black eye or the bruised cheek and the stained and torn clothing. I think it must have been that early practice that laid the foundation for my work as a novelist in later life. Strangely enough, my father never once put my bruised condition down to the right cause. He would accuse me of fighting, and when I denied it would flog me for lying, so in the end I invented boys and battles for him, and he rarely flogged me for my supposed fights; but he took to giving me boxing lessons himself, and some of those lessons I would have gladly

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exchanged for the whipping. He had a left hand of his own that searched for and found weak spots with painful accuracy. He was kind to a fault in some things, but over-harsh in others. The reason he gave me the start in life I have mentioned at the beginning of this chronicle came about through my own ineradicable love of practical joking. I was out one night on a 'possuming expedition when I ran into Dan Ray, the only policeman in the district. Dan was a hunch-back and a bad-tempered old chap, a sworn enemy of mine and of most boys. I knew he would tell my father and get me a hiding, and it flashed into my mind that I would do something to earn the hiding before I got it. Earlier in the night I had seen the American evangelist riding towards the hills. As Dan Ray stood mouthing and chuckling at me, I suddenly broke into a storm of sobs. Now Dan Ray had seen me take many a thrashing without whimpering much, and this show of emotion on my part astounded him. He saw blood on my hands and jacket; it was the blood of game. 'What wicked devilment have 'e been up to now?' he demanded, and I told him between sobs that I had accidentally shot the evangelist.

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He uttered a growl of horror. 'Wheer be the body?' he queried. I told him I had grown frightened at what I had done and had pushed the good man into the river; then I dropped my gun and ran into the shadow of the trees. Dan knew by much experience that he could not catch me; off he went with his tale of horror from house to house, and soon men with lanterns and dogs were searching far and near for the body of the victim, whilst I, perched in a tall tree, watched the procession. I heard remarks concerning myself from people as they passed under my tree that pained me. They searched all night and found nothing, and as I saw them come trailing homewards I was nearly happy. At dawn a grizzled police trooper came out from the city to join in the search. He was the trooper who always made the rounds of our district, and he and I were fast friends, though he had given me more than one belting for practical jokes played on himself, but he had taught me how to sit a horse properly. He had at one time been in a cavalry regiment, and his name was Tudor. Some chance made the trooper meet Dan Ray and a party of returning explorers close to my tree, at the foot of which my Irish terrier had perched

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himself. The trooper looked anxious. 'Have you found anything?' he asked. 'Not a sign,' replied Dan. 'Who was it told you about the shooting?' continued the trooper. 'He did himself.' Then the grizzled trooper chuckled. 'I'll bet a day's pay that young rip has been giving you some exercise for nothing; I know him root and branch. He sent me out seven miles once, said there was a dead body by the wayside; so there was, but it had been buried ten years and had a wooden cross over it, and the grave was railed in. I gave him some stirrup leather for that.' Dan Ray and the folks went away; the trooper lit a pipe, looked at my Irish terrier, but did not lift his eyes up my tree. Yet he must have been sure I was there, for he said, 'Where's the parson, you young swine?' 'Ten miles away in the hills christening Robinsons' new baby,' I replied. His shoulders shook with laughter, but he made no sound; he hated Dan Ray almost as much as I did. 'I'll go and tell your mother; you've scared her most to death,' he growled, and then added with a chuckle, 'Lord have mercy on you when the old man gets hold of you!' And the good-natured soldier rode off; and that was why my father gave me

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my start in life. I thought it was harsh treatment at the time, but since I have had boys of my own to bring up I have altered my opinion.

CHAPTER II

THE WAY OF THE TRANSGRESSOR IS HARD

THE great and disastrous Snowy River mining rush was in full swing at the time of my birth. My father had the gold fever very badly and went ; my mother was going also, but my advent spoilt her plans, and somehow, I fancy, the madre never quite forgave me for that, though why she wanted to go on such a cruel adventure passes my understanding. Men died like flies ; a few made great fortunes, but the majority of those who did get back had good cause to remember the venture as long as they lived. My father was made of chilled steel. He could live where most would die, and his grim determination would carry him through or over everything. The madre was one of those little frail slender creatures who look as if a frost would snuff them out, and yet manage to go through hardships that kill off the big lusty woman.

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My padre went away on a fine horse, and came home on foot ; he came home to an empty cupboard and a quiverful of children, and it was years before he had a streak of luck. Somehow I cannot help feeling that the circumstances operating upon my parents' minds immediately before my arrival on this planet must have had a good deal to do with my temperament. I believe in the eugenic theory to that extent. This much is certain : I have never been able as boy or man to resist the temptation when a gold fever has broken out, and the treasure-hunting mania has taken me half over the earth—from Lake Baikal to Port Darwin, from the Yellow River in China to the Welsh Hills—and I may add here that some day I believe that a big gold mine will be unearthed in Wales when the mining laws are made fit to suit a white man's country.

The night my father started me out to seek my fortune I had nothing in my pocket but three pennies and a clasp knife, no comrade but a black-guard Irish terrier with one ear torn to shreds and one eye nearly crushed out. I think if I could have had the old shot gun I would have been happy. Somewhere about thirty-five miles away to the east

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I knew there were 'hatters' fossicking for gold in the ranges, and I faced in that direction. It was the gold fever bubbling in my blood at thirteen as it will bubble again to-morrow if a strike is made in any part of the world; not that I am a money hog—I am not—but I love the thrill of the hunt. Kind-hearted wood-cutters gave me a share of their early morning meal—and I needed it after tramping all night—and then with the terrier for a pillow I slept the sleep of the just amongst some stringy-bark trees. A man who wanted a boy offered me work at a little isolated store towards dusk. I told him if he would give me a square meal I'd consider the proposition. He did so, and after I had eaten I said I'd considered the situation and preferred to be a gold 'fossicker.' He gave me a start very similar to that I had received from home, and to pay him for it I left his horse paddock gate open as I passed it a quarter of a mile further on, and as that paddock abutted on a dense scrub where horses would be as hard to catch as hares in a hay-field, I don't think he gained much on the deal. I was wandering about for a week, feeding, when I did feed, at the tents of the wood-splitters. Boys were

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very scarce, and I could have got a job anywhere, but I was set on gold fossicking. At last I came across an old 'hatter' working in the bed of a dry creek. A 'hatter' is a man who fossicks by himself, seeking alluvial gold. After a few years of this lonely life they become cranks on some subject, and 'as mad as a hatter' is an Australian proverb. I think my hatter was madder than most of his kind. He was very old, and at first looked on me as an angel in disguise. I have never been able to convince myself that he was a good judge; if he were alive I think it would take more to convince 'him.' He was sinking a shaft in stiff red clay, and had got down so far that he could not get on very fast by himself, as he had to climb down his shaft and dig, and then climb up again and haul up the dirt. The old chap had found good prospects on the surface, and reckoned if he could only sink to bed rock he would find his fortune. We became mates—the old man and the budding boy—and he taught me the love of prospecting, taught me to twirl a dish until I could find a speck of 'colour' as big as a bee's knee in a dish of dirt as surely as a terrier can find a rat in a drain; he taught me the craft of the thing so thoroughly that to-day I

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will back myself against any man living with a prospecting pan. He had made a windlass to haul dirt from his shaft, anyway he called it a windlass, and as you couldn't have called it anything else we can let the name go. He had made it of odds and ends, and nailed and tied it together in fantastic fashion. Only a crazy man or a schoolboy would have trusted himself to that patchwork concern. Where it should have been bolted with good stout iron bolts, it was clemmed together with strips of kangaroo hide, and it looked more like something for fowls to roost on than for people to trust their necks to. I was stout and strong for my age and let him down somehow, and at intervals pulled up the dirt that he dug. Our bucket was made of a couple of sheep skins sewn together, not much to look at, but it served. In the evenings the ancient hatter smoked his pipe and initiated me into the mysteries of prospecting. He had been everywhere where the metal was, and in a good many places where it was not; he had made wealth and wasted it, and was as poor as Job. He was typical of his class, a born optimist, who believed that sooner or later he would strike a 'pocket' of gold big enough to make him

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master of his destiny. We lived mostly on damper and tea. Damper is bushmen's bread made of flour and water, with a pinch of salt, the lot cooked on the embers. The grub was monotonous, to say the least of it, and in the end I took to climbing trees and, tomahawk in hand, cut off many a hollow log that held the nest of a 'possum, and when the log went crashing down my terrier, who was as tired of damper as I was, did the rest. 'Possum as an article of diet is not a thing to hanker after, the flesh is redolent of eucalyptus leaves, on which the pretty creatures live, but it was better than nothing. The old hatter caught lizards and fried them, but I had not reached the lizard stage. The 'ancient' would never work on a Sunday, and one Sabbath afternoon, wandering aimlessly in the scrub, I came upon a small bunch of sheep. One jumped past me. The tomahawk was in my hand, and I threw it. It was one of those things boys do on the impulse of the moment. The sheep dropped, and I felt cold all down the back, for sheep-stealing was in Australia in those days what horse-stealing was in America. To steal a sheep meant two years in gaol, if found out. With the old clasp-knife that sheep was skinned,

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and with the aid of the tomahawk it was cut up, and a muckier job has never come my way. The 'ancient' was furious when I crept into camp with part of the spoil, but he was a good sort in his way. He went to the scene and burnt the skin and the offal, and hid the mutton in a safe place, until by degrees we buried it inside ourselves, and we never heard anything about it ; but every time I saw a man looking for horses or cattle in the ranges for a long while I got palpitation of the heart, for there was no mercy for a sheep-stealer. We got down to bed-rock with our shaft at last, and rock was all we got. There wasn't a speck of gold there, though we had got 'colours' in the clay all the way down. The 'ancient' took the disappointment like a stoic, but I raged with the foolishness of youth. I have bottomed a good many score of duffers since then and learnt to accept it as the luck of the game. The 'ancient' took me through the hills fossicking, panning a dish of dirt here and there, sinking a shallow hole in another place, searching the nooks and crannies with our knife-blades. Sometimes we got a bit of metal, but not often. When we got a little, he would go off to buy stores, and he always brought back

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some rum, and while the rum lasted I usually slept up a tree, for the liquer changed him from a kindly, clean-mouthed, harmless old man into a cranky devil, and he often gave both me and the dog a lot of exercise, chasing us with a pick-handle to improve our morals; so one day we left, and I got a job in a splitters' camp. The men used to fell the stringy-bark trees and split them into posts and rails, and sell them where they could. Swinging an axe, rounding up horses in the hilly scrub, cooking for the men, sharpening saws with a file, and grinding axes on the stone, left me little time to manufacture poetry. They worked from dawn till dusk, and made me work. They were as rough as the timber they split, but not unkindly. They were very poor, and their luxuries were few. One Sabbath, when they were all away, in an excess of zeal I determined to give them a treat. Collecting the last of the flour in the bag, and all the raisins, I made a glorious 'duff,' as they called a pudding. I had seen my mother do it many a time, and thought it was easy; such a lot of things mother does are easy—to look at. It panned out to be the biggest 'duff' ever seen in those parts, and no cloth in camp would hold it, so I slipped it

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into a pillow case, which, Heaven knows how ! had got into the splitters' camp. Darby Mulchay had been using it ever since its arrival, and it was not spotless, but it was that or nothing. Then I got the lot into the big camp oven and poured in as much water as the large oven would hold, which wasn't much, for the 'duff' nearly filled it even, when raw. I did not know that puddings swell as they cook, but they do. That one did ; it swelled till it squeezed all the water out of the camp oven, and fitted the pot like a thumb in a glove, and I could smell it was burning, not boiling ; for half an hour I tried to get it out of the pot, and failed, though I pulled it until the old pillow case tore into shreds. I knew the thing wasn't going to be a success as a pudding, and decided to transform it into a cake. Never did man, woman or boy work harder or more conscientiously than I worked on that cake, but it cooked all round the sides as hard as a mill stone, whilst the middle remained a sludgy mass. With burnt fingers and scorched face I was crouching over it when the men came home—tired, savage, and hungry. They had been drinking too. The contractor they had been splitting for for a couple of months had bolted

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and left them unpaid. 'What's that in the oven, kid?' demanded Darby Mulchay. I looked up at the big fellow and tried to smile, but I don't think the tears were a mile away, for I felt my failure. Still I did my best to put a brave face on it, and whispered, 'Cake.' Darby started back. 'Phwat?' 'Cake, Darby.' The men pressed round the camp fire; they prized off the camp oven lid with a sapling, and they looked at the—cake. It was burnt black two inches from the edges inwards, the centre was pulp. Some one turned up the empty flour sack and the vacant raisin tin. There was not a scrap of grub in camp, the township was miles away, and their credit was gone. I think if they had realized that a boy had been trying with all his heart to do them honour, they would not have done what they did during the next ten minutes. I have had some madly happy moments in my life, but this was not one of them. I think it was the liquor that blinded them, for they were not cruel men. They tried to make me eat the 'cake.' To this hour I shy from a pastrycook's window like a timid horse from a shadow. Then Jim Lord, the sawyer, struck me with his clenched fist, and I dropped, and Darby

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Mulchay smashed his fist into Lord's face and knocked him into the fire, and some one hit Darby behind the ear, and he dropped to his knees, and I threw a billy can full of steaming water at the man who struck Darby; and when I woke up next morning I was miles away from the splitters' camp, my dog was licking my face, and every bone in my body was aching.

My next job was in a bush store. Then I travelled with a sheep drover and did odd jobs on a station, and picked up with a fellow who got his living breaking horses to saddle, and trapping and shooting wild dogs or 'dingoes.' The dingo is the curse of the sheep-farmer. A pair of these animals will do a hundred pounds' worth of damage in the lambing season in one night, for they dash from ewe to ewe, and rip and tear and maim for the sheer devilment of the game. Any sheep farmer will pay from a half-guinea to a guinea for a dingo scalp, and the Government subsidy is the same, but they are so fast and so cunning that the man who gets the scalp earns the money. You can't run them down in the saddle without the risk of foundering a good horse; and they are too cute to be trapped; they know poison better than a

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trained chemist ; and shooting them is costly in cartridges, for they never seem to be off their guard. My light weight in the saddle made me valuable to the trapper, but he got an overseas job, and I went on my way. I drifted homewards again, and one day, when about five-and-twenty miles from home, I met my old friend the trooper, and he told me my mother had been fretting her heart out about me, and in his rough soldierly way advised me to go home and make peace with my father. ‘ You’ll be all right,’ he added, ‘ if you’ll keep away from the praying machines, religion don’t suit you.’ I walked by his stirrup, and now and again he gave me a pull at his briar, and at times he walked and I rode his big grey troop horse, and he told me tales of his soldier days that made a funny prickling sensation come into my blood. I did not know what it meant then ; I know now, for I have lived the soldier’s life and loved it. Twelve miles from home we pulled up at a small horse-breeder’s place, and the trooper tried to borrow a horse for me. The breeder was a ruffian, an ex-convict from over the border. He said I could have a horse he indicated if I could ride it, if the trooper would guarantee its return.

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They bridled the brute and strapped a sheepskin on its back in lieu of a saddle, and the trooper tossed me up. The brute was a big ragged-hipped, fiddle-headed animal, and I had scarcely touched the sheepskin before it set to work. There was a plunge and a snort, a rapid little rush, and then my arms were almost torn from the sockets as the big head went down and the heels went up. That was the beginning of the fight. He was too strong for me ; every plunge, every leap and buck weakened me. The trooper saw how it was and yelled, 'Give him his head and ride on your balance.' Many a time he had impressed that lesson on me, and now it stood me in good stead. I stopped fighting, and rode on my balance ; and that took half the sting out of the buckjumper. I caught a glimpse of the grinning face of the ex-convict, and saw, as in a dream, the hard, kindly face of the trooper, and did my best ; but I was only a boy, and my nerve failed as the devil under me wheeled and plunged. There came a moment when he got all four hoofs together under his belly, head down, back 'roached' like a segment of a circle, thighs tucked under flanks, then a bound in the air, a half-twist as he rose, and then a sudden

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straightening of every limb, and a ragged boy flying through space like a rocket. The trooper picked me up, and as I clung white, weak and trembling to the sleeve of his tunic, he put his flask to my lips and I had my first taste of whisky. 'Had enough of the horse, kid?' It was the sneering voice of the convict. I had had more than enough, but would rather have been killed than show the white feather in front of the trooper, for he was the only man who had ever believed in me up to that date. I made a move towards the ugly brute that a black boy had captured and was holding, but my friend pulled me back. He knew I was beaten. Then he took the saddle from his own horse and flung it on the 'outlaw,' and leapt lightly to his seat; and then began a battle that was worth going a long way to see. The big 'outlaw' fought like a devil unchained, but the man on his back was his master. He had learnt to sit a horse in a cavalry regiment, and from that hour to this I've never seen his equal, not even Billy Frost or Jack Burgess, two of the best wild-horse breakers Australia ever bred. The spurs were red on his heels before the big horse caved in, cowed and beaten. Then the trooper put him

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through it, wheeled him to right and left, cantered, trotted and walked him. Then he jumped lightly down, gave me the reins, and walking to the convict hit him clean off his feet with a straight left-handed drive. The beast lay where he fell. 'That's for putting a boy on a horse you hadn't the pluck to back yourself, you cur,' he said, and from that hour onward he was my boyish hero. I know now he was a gentleman, who had kicked over the traces ; but, whatever his sins may have been, I only wish I could meet a few more like him to-day. When home was reached, I found my mother ill ; the grim old padre did not kill the fattened calf on my arrival, but if there had been no sickness in the house I would have stood a good chance of taking the calf's place. He had had some luck ; the place looked much nicer than when I left it. My slip panel was gone, and a nice big double gate had taken its place ; an elegant garden full of rose bushes had come into existence ; new rooms had been built in front of the cabin ; a gravelled path led from the front door to the white gate ; and I remember how out of place I felt—ragged, sun burned, with a shirt that was little else than button holes, an old felt hat grimed

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with much use, and a pair of trousers that were as full of gaps as a picket fence, my yellow hair had grown very long, and I had not broken many combs in the care of it. The only thing that matched me was the dilapidated terrier, but we were both healthy specimens of our sort, hardened by work and exposure, and there wasn't an atom of contrition in either of our carcasses. It was the Sabbath day, a holy calm sat on all things. Our folks were away at a religious meeting. As the dog and I surveyed the changed scene, they came home, and a bunch of neighbours came with them. All were in Sunday best: my preacher brother, his Bible under one arm, his sweetheart on the other, led the procession; the madre, looking very worn and ill, came next with the padre; and the rest, young and old, in a bunch, with the evangelist, who had been the cause of my hasty departure from the paternal roof, in the centre. I knew the signs. They were going to break bread at our place, and have an afternoon catch-as-catch-can with Satan. Other neighbours would flock in, and brands would be plucked from the burning. When they saw me, they all stood still; a flush of pain crept over the madre's worn face, for the ragged,

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tousled bush arab must have looked sadly out of harmony amongst the clean, well-dressed throng. I saw the 'old man's' strong fingers clench round his stout malacca cane—I knew that cane, and out of the tail of my eye measured the new fence. The evangelist gave me a sickly smile that made me hate him. Tilly Grey hurried forward and kissed me; my maternal grandmother, a fierce old woman with English gipsy blood in her veins, came up and fixed her sloe-black inscrutable eyes on my face, and her mouth twitched in a half-smile as she took me in from head to foot. She had never wasted a tender word on me in her life, or on any one else, I think. The rest filed past me. Mother would have stopped, but the stern old man would not let her. The evangelist's son, a cub without a hair out of place, gave me a look as he went by which made me register a promise, which was faithfully kept the first time I met him alone. It was 'granny' who gave me meat and decent raiment, and then the smug-faced evangelist prayed for me. I would rather have had the dad's licking. I came near getting both, for the evangelist took as his text that afternoon a verse from the Old Testament, in which it said, 'The Lord commanded the

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Captain of the hosts of Israel to lay waste the cities of the enemy, to give the women and the children to the sword, *and to hough the horses*'; and when the smug-faced holy man appealed to me in order to see if I had returned to the tents of my people with a broken and a contrite spirit, I said I didn't believe the Lord had ever said anything of the kind. I did not believe God would order any one to hough horses. I said it was a lie, for I loved horses then as I love them now.

These memoirs are only leaves from my life, not a detailed biography, so I will pass over a good deal that happened. The madre, thinking she was not long for this world, induced me to remain home, and be apprenticed, but I did not stay long. I broke my indentures and bolted, was brought back by the police and punished; but my employer came to me later and begged me to pack up and get out, and I did. I worked a passage aboard ship abroad, and for a time the places that had known me knew me no more, and I have never heard that any one went into mourning over my absence. My dog was dead; he died suddenly through getting in the way of a shot-gun when

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helping himself to chicken on a neighbouring farm. I did not raise a stone to his memory, but I raised a good many to the farmer that shot him, when he was driving home and the nights were dark.

CHAPTER III

FOLLY THAT LED TO CRIME

WHEN I was quite a little kiddie, our next-door neighbour was a good old man who considered he had a mission to convert all humanity; he was a crank, but he was genuine. Many a time when I was a bigger lad I heard him preaching at street corners on Sabbath days; he worked all the week and of an evening would walk miles to sit with a sick person and read the Bible, or sing hymns, or pray. He was the gentlest soul I ever met, but, like Jeremiah, he could see no good thing in this world; the beauty of the dawn, the glory of the noonday hour, the solemn splendour of the noon of night, when the sentinel stars kept watch in the blue-black skies—all was lost on him; he preached woe, desolation, despair and hell-fire, and spoke of little but the wrath to come. If ever

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a man was in mortal fear of the Almighty, that preacher was. He had two sons, who were the model lads of the district, mild of face, modest of manner, good, clean-living young fellows to all outward seeming; they never mixed in the fun or frolic of the community, but worked hard and walked in the narrow way.

One night the old preacher was walking homewards from a prayer-meeting when a weapon was thrust into his face by a masked man, and a savage voice told him to 'Bail up!' Another masked figure cropped up out of the shadows and turned the preacher's pockets out, and he was let go upon his way; he turned and prayed for his spoilers. This happened close to our home. Then began a series of similar outrages. One man was shot in the open street and robbed of money and watch; travellers were 'stuck up' in all directions at the pistol's point; houses were broken into and ransacked; mail coaches and horsemen were held up, and not the faintest clue was ever left to guide the authorities in their search for the highwaymen. They knew the district like a book, and always struck where the search parties were not placed. Vigilance committees were formed, and the old

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preacher's two sons turned out and joined in the hunt.

My father was also on the vigilance committee, and my eldest brother, who afterwards became an 'expounder of the Word,' thought it would be a good joke to bail the dear old dad up some night and see what he would do. He and a friend craped their faces and stood in our garden ; the dad came along in the starlight with his crisp, quick tread, whistling a bar of 'Sally in our Alley.' He was fronted by a pair of masked figures and told to throw his hands up—and he did, but not in the way the amateur highwaymen expected, and neither of them needed crape to disguise their faces when they picked themselves up ; if they had possessed any yearnings towards the highwayman business prior to that occasion, it left them very suddenly that night. But the real robbers went on with their work unchecked for a long time, and much mischief was done until a woman gave the game away.

The police swarmed down upon the poor old local preacher's home and captured one son ; the other escaped and took to the hills, and was, of course, out-lawed and hunted down ; the

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other was sentenced to imprisonment for life. All the booty was found hidden in the legs of tables which had been hollowed out for that purpose.

The whole countryside gasped with amazement when the identity of the robbers was disclosed ; not a living soul had suspected them, least of all the members of the vigilance committee on which they had served so actively. It transpired afterwards that they had started the business as a practical joke ; it was they who had held the preacher up in front of our place in the hope of curing him of roaming about at night praying. When they found that their disguise was so good that their own father did not know them, they kept up the frolic, until the notoriety their escapades caused grew upon them ; then came the shedding of blood and they were in it up to their necks and could not, or would not, turn back. I saw one of them working in prison many years after, and a milder-looking person I never looked upon. Very possibly, if his father, instead of praying for him and his brother the night they stuck him up, had dealt with them as my dear old padre dealt with my brother and his frolicsome friend, the real bush-

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ranging would never have happened, which leads me to the opinion that there is a time to pray and a time to punch hard with both hands.

Very early in life I began to write stories ; I wrote them anywhere and anyhow ; in those callow days realism was a fetish with me. I wrote life as it was and nearly came to an early ending thereby.

I knew a mighty man of his hands, a blacksmith by trade, and I also knew by sight and repute, a damsel who carried milk from dwelling to dwelling, a handsome, untamed spitfire, with masses of hair the colour of burnished copper, the skin upon her long, round throat was whiter than the milk she sold ; but if her flesh was like wool, her reputation was scarlet, and that is putting it mildly.

I had no reason to believe that the brawny son of the hammer and anvil had ever spoken to the blonde beauty ; as a matter of fact I know now that he never had, but they were far and away the two most striking figures in the neighbourhood. I discovered a lot about their striking capabilities later on ; I wrote a long serial and made them the central figures. In my pages I took them for many rambles by moonlight ; I was very young, and

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loved moonlight scenes then. I know there was a baby in the story, a very irregular kind of a baby which ought never to have got into print. The red-headed milkmaid left it (in the novel) on the blacksmith's doorstep one chilly winter's morn and made him kick worse than any horse he ever shod. Just how hard he could kick I was to discover in the fulness of time.

I found an editor who was willing to publish that serial ; he said he saw genius in it, and added that the dream of his life was to help budding genius to bloom. I'll stake my soul he never helped another bud. I was away working for a horse-breaker when the first four or five instalments got into print, and if I had known what was waiting for me I'd have remained away till now. When I got to town and found my story was in print, I think I was the proudest thing that ever wore trousers. I lay on my bed and read every word that was published, and that night I never slept a wink ; the clarion call of fame was ringing on the winds of night. I rose early, for it seemed to me everybody would want to welcome home the lad who had risen so swiftly above his fellows. I have had many thrills in a not unadventurous life, but never one

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like that. I was as proud as a young mother with her first baby ; and as I looked at the pages where my name stood in big letters, I felt a lump rise in my throat. I did not guess how many lumps were to rise on various parts of my anatomy before the sun went down.

As I walked the village street I peeped surreptitiously out of the tail of my eye at the familiar windows, expecting to see the curtains pulled aside, that envious eyes might feast upon the young author—no curtains moved. At the corner store a man I loathed was taking down the shutters for the day. He grinned when he saw me. I flung him a nod, feeling that a mortal with a halo could afford to let old enmities die.

‘I been reading your story,’ he called after me, and I paused ; it was the first flower thrown at the feet of greatness, and I could not resist the lure, though this old devil had predicted a thousand times in my hearing that I would live to be hanged.

‘Everybody round here’s been readin’ your story, spechially the milkmaid an’ the blacksmith.’ He chortled as he spoke, and I could see the red gums where the teeth were not.

‘What do the folks think of the tale?’ The

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question popped out before I could stop it, though I could have bitten my tongue for betraying my anxiety. He chuckled deep down inside himself.

‘Dunno,’ he replied, ‘but I saw the blacksmith plaiting a new raw-hide whip after he’d read last week’s instalment. If I was you I’d go up country again afore he knows you’re back, or go to sea.’ Without a word I walked on, pitying the man who was jealous of a boy’s fame.

Halfway down the village street I passed a house standing back in its own garden. A magnificent-looking girl with a mane of copper-coloured hair was coming down the path towards the street gate, carrying a pail of milk. She wore a white blouse and skirt; the skirt was kilted up and displayed a good deal of a red petticoat; her feet were encased in stout boots. I may in time forget the copper-coloured hair, the splendid bust, the sensuous carmine lips, and the big glowing eyes, but I swear I shall never forget those boots. She was smiling. When her eyes fell on me, a wave of passionate crimson rushed up her white throat and drowned her face. With three quick strides and a spring she was with me; the arm that carried the milk-pail described a circle and so did I. Three

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times that pail came round and I've hated milk ever since. Then she tangled her fingers in my hair and kicked at my shins, and each time she kicked she screamed :

‘ You beast, you liar ! little beast, I'll teach you to say I left a baby on a doorstep ! ’

What sort of a welcome home was that for a genius ! I was going to have my hair cut that day, but by the time I had got away from my heroine there was no need. The worst of it all was that every one sympathized with the milkmaid, and good lads who went regularly to church were warned by their parents to have nothing to do with the idle scamp who filled in his time writing novels, yet every word of that serial had been written after work that lasted from six in the morning till long after sun down—it was the realism that did it, but there was more to follow. For nearly a week the mighty blacksmith hunted me, until in sheer desperation I turned at bay and offered to give him battle. I knew I hadn't a ghost of a chance, but reckoned that if I had to die young, I might as well die quickly and get it over. His grim mouth twitched in a smile when I offered to fight, and he took pity upon me and compromised

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the matter by giving me a lesson with the gloves instead. After the lesson I loathed the word 'compromise' and wished I'd had the fight instead; after the 'lesson' he said:

'Now, young 'un, you run away and stick to your work and leave that writing game alone, or you'll end your days on a chain.' It was the best advice I ever had, and I wish I had taken it.

A week later I called on the editor who had published my story and asked him for payment. He looked at me with bulging eyes to see if I was sane. He was a lanky man with straggling sandy whiskers and a general appearance of slackness all over him; his mouth was slack, so were his knees, and his hands dangled at his sides as if they had been sewn on to the arm-stumps with poor thread. I noticed that one side of his face had whiskers on it, the other was nearly plucked, and the general surface of his physiognomy looked as if he had been bird-nesting in a blackthorn hedge with his head, with his hands tied.

'By jove!' he gasped, 'pay you! I've paid already, paid in blood and hair. Look at my face, you incarnate young devil; your she-cat of a heroine has been here!'

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‘You told me to pick a real character and be true to life,’ I protested.

‘Did I?’ he moaned. ‘Well, then, the next time you have a heroine you find a dead one. It took me forty years to grow my whiskers and she took them out in as many seconds. I don’t want any more geniuses, nor local colour; get out and stay out!’

As I stood on the sidewalk, ruminating on the general unsatisfactoriness of literary fame, a couple of cattle-drovers came riding by. They were sun-tanned, bearded men who swayed loosely in their saddles as they rode; one of the pair had the reins of a third hack dangling from his hand. Moved by the impulse of the moment, I sprang forward and drew their attention.

‘What’s up, sonny?’ demanded one, removing his pipe from his mouth and eyeing me sharply.

‘Are you going droving?’ I queried.

‘No, we’ve just finished droving; we’re going back into the bush. Want to come, eh?’

‘Yes.’

‘Can you ride?’

‘Yes.’

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The two cattle men looked at each other, then at me and the third stock-horse.

‘Get up and come along then.’

The speaker threw me the reins ; I slipped into the saddle, and away we rode, our faces turned towards the far north. The drovers were silent, hard-bitten men ; they never asked me why I wanted to leave the town or anything about my business ; they never even asked me my name, but promptly dubbed me Jack, and just plain Jack I was to them to the end of the chapter. They wanted a strong, keen lad who could sit a horse and was not afraid of work ; as for the rest they did not care a rap if I was a duke’s son or a runaway ship’s apprentice. They had left a mate of theirs in the hospital, and it was his stock-horse and saddle that had fallen to my lot.

I loved the life in the bush, rounding up cattle, branding, ‘cutting out,’ overlanding—it was all grand in its way and I lived close to nature. One thing I never could learn, and that was to swing a stock-whip properly ; some lads pick up the knack of it in a week, others never learn in a lifetime, and I was one of that sort. I could always hurt myself with a stock-whip more than I could hurt anything

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else, but I could ride through timber or over rotten ground with the best of them.

Men who live in cities, or dwell on the open plains, can form no idea of what riding through scrub timber after cattle means; no ordinary horse, no matter how well bred, is any use amongst timber, unless bred and reared in it. The very best animals are got by crossing Timor pony mares with a blood horse, and when the mare is 'stinted' she should be turned loose to roam in the scrub; when she has dropped her foal she will travel with it amongst the trees seeking grass and water, and in this way the youngsters learn the tricks of the trees. At three years old they are broken to saddle and commence to earn their livelihood as stock-horses; their sagacity is phenomenal, their staying powers almost beyond credence, their speed great, but their best quality is their adaptability in turning and wheeling when galloping at full speed; a good five-year-old stock-horse will turn on a dinner plate when in full stride with a heavy man in the saddle. When 'cutting out' cattle from a mob, a stock-horse proves its worth; it knows instantly the beast you are after, and will work to cut the steer out of the bunch with the

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sagacity of a trained sheep-dog cutting out sheep for a shepherd. Such a horse will work a beast right through a mob of a thousand head ; all the stockman has to do is to sit tight and ply his stock-whip freely, the less he meddles with the reins the better, but he *must* sit tight, for a fall in the midst of a mob of scrub cattle means death.

This is exciting work, but it is child's play to the time when the wild cattle are ranging the timber ; it is then that the desperate riding has to be done. The cattle rush off like devil-tormented things as soon as they see the horsemen, and then it's a case of sitting close, crouching low, to avoid overhanging branches, and away you go like a hurricane. Knees, thighs, and calves are bruised, scarred, and scraped as you burst through the scrub in the wake of the mob to outflank them and wheel them. They will always make for the mountains, if there are any near, and they charge up at speed, and go down the opposite slopes like an avalanche and plunge into the darkest ravines. When a mob of wild scrub cattle are on the rush they go sweeping everything in front of them with irresistible fury ; they leap ravines, bound over fallen timber, burst through matted scrub and hurl themselves

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over rocks, and the stockman must follow hard in their wake or be shamed amongst his kind; nay, if his stock-horse is fast enough, he must catch them, ride along their flank and head them away from their familiar stamping grounds. Some day an Australian genius will leap to life who will write a great epic on this theme, for the life is vivid with peril; and deeds of wonderful daring are done every day by the wild riders of the timber country; it's no game for weaklings, it's a man's game and it makes strong men stronger. Since those old days I have ridden with the cow-boys of North America, the Vaqueros of the southern Republics, with the Cossacks of the Siberian frontier and the Basutos of South Africa; but in all the world I have seen no men to match those dare-devil, close-lipped, dour, silent men of Australia. If war¹ ever comes to them and they are formed into cavalry regiments, as they surely will be, they will carry the spears into Hades itself and scatter the coals as they ride.

¹ *Editor's note.*—This was written long before the Great War proved the worth of the men of Anzac.

CHAPTER IV

PROSPECTING FOR OPALS

THE bush work palled upon me at last, and I put the money I had saved into an opal-prospecting scheme and went in search of the beautiful stones known to all the world.

Opals are said to be unlucky—they were for me, for our venture was a failure. We worked hard and travelled far, but never found a vein worth sticking to; this was all the more tantalizing as we constantly found stray specimens of surpassing beauty, but no deposit worth working. Only once did we strike a vein that was worth having; it was about an inch wide and ran through the centre of a long ridge of blackish grey granite which proved to be as hard as the hardest flint I have ever seen. The best of our steel drills would not face it, and we had to let it lie intact; there lay the opals like a long narrow ribbon, sparkling with myriad

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colours, impregnably flanked by the flinty granite ; it made our fingers itch to see it lying there—but we were powerless. We all had visions of going back some day and prospecting that country more thoroughly, but none of us ever did.

I never had any luck with opals, but Charley Porter, one of Australia's best prospectors and a great friend of mine, always swore by them, and well he might, for he made much coin of the realm out of his finds in a different district. I left him many a long year afterwards in the Coolgardie goldfields, when I started for the South African war with the first Australian contingent, and the last words he said to me were :

‘ When you come back, old pal, we'll go and hunt up that opal country of your youth.’ But when I came home from the war he was dead of sun-stroke, and that ribbon of opals may stay where they are till the crack of doom for all I care, for I have a prejudice concerning them ; it may sound babyish, but there it is.

Amongst other things to account for that feeling I may mention the following trifling incidents. I exchanged a handkerchief full of opal specimens for a quiet saddle hack ; the second day I rode the

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opal horse, he leapt like a thing demented from under me, going sideways, frightened by his own shadow, for there was nothing else to scare the brute. I was sitting loosely in the saddle smoking, as we ambled along, when he jumped, and I broke my collar bone ; nothing much, but enough to go on with. Working on Tetulpa goldfields for alluvial metal, I got on speaking terms with the wife of a Spanish prospector. There was never a more harmless episode in this world ; she did a little sewing for me, put some buttons on my shirts, and as she would not take payment I looked through my kit and found a nice opal specimen and gave it to her. The Spaniard had seen the opal in my tent. When he saw it in his wife's possession he came over in the night with a knife, to remove the buttons his wife had sewn on ; he came pretty near removing my vital spark at the same time. Later, in city life, I had a number of very pretty pieces of opal strung together by gold links and formed into a bangle, which I gave to a pretty lass I had danced with a few times. Almost immediately afterwards her mother, a mercenary hen, asked what my intentions were. I did not like the look in her eye, and said my intentions were to

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quit the country by the next boat. Then mother and daughter paraded the opal bangle and swore they would put it in evidence against me in an action for breach of promise, and they would have done it, too, only I was on the high seas before they could operate ; yet I had made no promise. I was working my passage that time, and a Chinese steward saw some of the opal samples in my baggage, and as the heathen coveted the stones, he left the ship at the next port, and my baggage went with him. The last specimen I had was a lovely black opal, set in a gold ring. I gave that as a keepsake to my eldest boy when he was sailing from England to Egypt, on a gold-mining trip. In the Red Sea the dhow he was on foundered and he lost everything but his shirt and his revolver. Once when out prospecting with a man named Dick Williams, the latter saw a bit of opal shale shining in the dry grass ; he stooped to pick it up and was bitten several times on the hand by a small brown snake. He was scared almost to death, and so hacked his hand about with his knife to eliminate the poison that he was practically crippled for life. He had put his foot on the reptile that bit him and broken its back. When

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I went to have a look at the reptile, I found it was of the non-poisonous variety, the bites being therefore no worse than a few scratches from a kitten. The funny part of it was that my mate was an expert on snakes, yet this one had cost him his hand ; he must have been opal bewitched to have mistaken the thing that bit him for the deadly brown snake with its diamond-shaped head and malignant eyes—a sheep would have known better.

Talking of sheep and snakes, though the sheep is in all else the king of fools, there is no case on record of a sheep having ever been captured by a snake, though they roam in their millions where snakes of the wickedest kind abound. It cannot be their wool that protects them, for the legs of the Australian sheep are practically guiltless of wool ; they know their danger well enough, but they avoid it in some magical manner. There is a saying amongst old Australian shepherds which means a lot : ‘ Beware of the bush that a sheep shies from.’

CHAPTER V

I HAVE GREATNESS THRUST UPON ME

GREATNESS is a funny thing ; sometimes it is the offspring of merit, often it is the illegitimate child of luck. One day I visited a township race-meeting, and for tricks that were sinful and shrewd and unscrupulous, an old-time Australian township race-meeting would take a lot of beating. At that period, not having a figure I was ashamed of, I was a bit of a dandy and sported tight-fitting riding breeches of the finest material, and top boots that were a joy to my soul. Scarcely had I reached the race-course ere I found myself besieged on all sides. There were two hurdle-races, and every one who had a horse entered wanted me to ride for him ; social jealousy ran high, and every horse was a trier. Being young, and not without vanity, I put the demand for my services down to my shape, and being a

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fool—as all cubs are—I consented to ride the horse of a young widow, who was sporting half-tone colours in her mourning garb. I did not consent because I liked the look of the horse, but because I liked the look of the widow ; she had a waist—well, we won't talk about that now—she also had a bank balance which was not as slender as her waist by a long, long way. I wish I could embrace that bank balancee now !

At the time I am writing of, Tom Hales, the most famous of all Australian horsemen, who was to the antipodes what Archer was to England, was a public idol, and I owed my popularity on the township race-course to the fact that a sporting publican had seen me talking to Tom Hales at Flemington, and as I bore the same name and wore riding breeches I was supposed to be his brother. I was not—the relationship was not so close as that.

I do not know who had induced my fair widow to enter her horse for the hurdles ; whoever it was I'll swear he had never ridden the brute over jumps. Three-quarters thorough-bred, bred on a station, with a neck like a fireman's hose, and a head like a hatchet ; with an eye that rolled until only the whites were visible, legs flat boned and shapely,

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hoofs as big as dinner plates, a pair of ragged hips, a great deep chest and mighty barrel, a sloping shoulder and a rat tail ; with a temper like an old maid's, jilted on the last lap. Some fellow with a streak of devilish humour in him had baptized this nightmare ' St. Patrick,' and I wish the saint had ridden him instead of me that day.

' He's playful at the start,' whispered the widow, as I was about to mount, and as she spoke it seemed to my youthful vanity that her fingers lingered on my silken sleeve longer than was absolutely necessary. She was quite truthful—St. Patrick *was* playful at first ; but if what he did was the widow's idea of playfulness, I don't wonder her first husband died young, and I'm glad I did not permanently fill the vacancy caused by his departure to a happy land.

St. Patrick did not seem to think he had been entered for a race ; he had evidently misunderstood the terms of the contract and imagined he had joined a circus ; his main idea was to see if he could stand on his head more times than any animal had ever done since the creation. When not standing on his hatchet head he was sitting on the root of his rat tail and trying to scoop me

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out of the saddle with his dinner-plate hoofs. Yes, St. Patrick was decidedly of a playful disposition. During a lull in the storm, some fool asked me what I thought of my chances of pulling the race off. I told him I did not know, but I'd give him a tenner if he would pull *me* off.

It was a quarter of an hour before St. Patrick could be induced to go through the gate on to the course, and then he playfully took half the gate with him. At the post he savaged a couple of horses, and their riders aimed blows at him with the butts of their whips, and hit me. When the field wheeled for a flying start, St. Patrick wheeled for home and took me into a sandwich booth. He did not eat the sandwiches, but he did his level best to eat everything else that he got near, including the hot coffee urn, the semi-boiling contents of which he managed to get into one of my boots. I was feeling hot before that, and the coffee did not cool me any, so I picked up the whip and became as playful as St. Patrick himself.

The starter was a good fellow, and I found out later had some money on my mount because he was sweet on the widow. He tried to lead St. Patrick to the starting post. He did, but not in

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the manner he intended, for as soon as he grabbed at the bridle, St. Patrick grabbed at him. He ran towards the post and St. Patrick followed with his mouth open ; the starter got on the far side of the rails and performed his duties from there, and some of the language he hurled at St. Patrick would have taken the hair off a hog.

At last my brute made a dash in the right direction ; the starter, glad to get rid of him on any terms, dropped the flag, though most of the other horses were fronting the wrong way, or wheeling to get into line. The public put my advantageous start down to clever manipulation on my part and cheered me like madmen ; if the truth must be told, I did not deserve those plaudits, for at the moment when St. Patrick took it into his hatchet head to commence the race, I was meditating on the advisability of falling off and letting him go the course alone, or go to the devil. The crowd, magnetized by the glamour of Tom Hales' name, put my luck down to skill ; hats and kerchiefs were waved as we thundered down the straight towards the first hurdle, and the good old welkin rang with the volume of the cheering. The brute could gallop—I knew that the moment he moved ;

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but would he jump? that was the problem that was seething in my brain as we swept up to the stand. He did not keep me long in doubt—he would not; instead of lifting his head and sighting his panel to measure his leap, he put his roman nose low down and charged the hurdle with his chest, bursting through like a storm. I tried to lift him with hands and hooks—I might as well have tried to lift a steam roller. The shock of the impact took me out of the saddle on to his neck, but before I could collect my* senses sufficiently to roll off gracefully, he tossed his head up with a jerk that put me back in the saddle, and the grandstand fairly rocked with the cheers that greeted my skilful (?) recovery. If the howling mob had only known it, I would have given my kingdom to have been down a rabbit burrow at that moment rather than in the saddle.

The field came up and swept by, for the hurdle-bursting episode had brought us nearly to a standstill, and I prayed that St. Patrick had broken a blood-vessel—but he hadn't. I groaned as I felt him snatch at the bit and rush into his stride; a couple of horses jumping at the same panel at the next hurdle brought it down, and into the gap I

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steered my mount in the wake of the field. I thought he would gallop through, as any other equine animal would have done, but he had other views ; he would not jump an inch when there was an obstacle to clear ; now, when there was a big gap and nothing to jump, he tucked his thighs in under his flanks and leapt like a stag over an imaginary obstacle. I have ridden many a queer race since then, but never did I have a more sickening sensation than this leap gave me, it was like riding grey death at a shadow fence. He had the pace of the field and caught the other horses when he wanted to, but at every jump he developed something new ; some of the hurdles he climbed over ; some he took sideways ; he shirked some, and some he rushed, but he bungled them all. Coming to the last one he propped as dead as a stone, wheeled round and gave me the impression he was going to buck himself over backwards. We were still arguing the point, St. Patrick and I, when the winner passed the post ; we'd have been there yet if the crowd had not started to throw lemonade bottles at the beast. A man in the mob, who had backed the brute, wanted to know how much I had been paid to ' pull ' the beast at the last hurdle ; a

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steward asked me if Tom Hales, the champion, was really my brother, and when I told him no, the glamour fell from me like scales from a leper ; all St. Patrick's sins were visited upon my head ; the fickle mob found more names for me in five minutes than I have been able to forget ever since ; seven different men whom I had never spoken to in my life swore I had told them I was the champion horseman's brother ; the pretty widow called me an impostor and wished she'd let the Chinese cook from her station ride St. Patrick instead of me, then, even if he hadn't won, her colours would not have been disgraced ; the fellow who owned the ruined coffee stall made me pay for the breakages, and the local ladies, when they passed me, drew away their skirts and tilted their noses as if they were passing through a fish market.

In the second hurdle race, St. Patrick was ridden by a black boy who had been promised the ride in the first race until some fool told the widow I was Tom Hales' brother. The animal walked on to the course like a hearse horse, stood at the post like a graven god, galloped as true as a line, jumped like a buck, and won in a walk. Then the crowd was sure I had sold the first race, and I was invited

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to put as much distance as possible between that township and myself before the last race on the card, or be ridden on a rail. Having had all the riding I wanted for that day, I went, cursing St. Patrick and wondering at the difference in his behaviour in the two races. At a distant date, that riddle was read for me by a Chinaman who acted as cook for a party of scalp-hunters of whom I was one ; it was kangaroo, wild dog and rabbit scalps—not humans—we were after.

One idle day the heathen said to me :

‘ You ride in races now ? You welly fond of races one time.’

‘ Yes,’ I answered, ‘ I ride at bush meetings sometimes.’

He peered into my face and chuckled.

‘ You lember St. Patlick, eh ? You savee St. Patlick ; welly funny horse when he stand on he head.’

‘ What the devil do *you* know of St. Patrick ? ’

Then he told me with many chuckles that he had been cook on the station where that equine was trained, and knew his temper ; he and the black boy between them, when saddling the horse for the race, had slipped a Scotch thistle burr under the

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saddle because they learnt on the course that I was to ride instead of the aboriginal to whom the mount had been promised, and the pagan added : ‘ Saint Patlick was a welly nice horse unless anything tickled him, but if he was tickled he wasn’t a horse, he was a devil ! ’ I may add that when I heard the reason of my humiliation I put something worse than a Scotch thistle under the pagan, and ever afterwards took precious good care neither he nor any other man ever put a saddle on for me.

CHAPTER VI

WHY I BECAME AN ACTOR

I ALWAYS had secret yearnings toward the stage, and in the rosy dawn of youth imagined that I might win fame in that direction, though I never quite forsook my first love and still wrote short stories and serials at any odd time when I had a little leisure. I wrote them by the diggers' camp fires; in the stockmen's huts; in the fo'c'sle of ships. I sold many and got paid for but few. A good number found their way into American publications, but somehow I could not hit the taste of English editors. Scores of stories I sent to London came back with a celerity that astounded me. I've raised homing pigeons in my day, and raced them; but never did my pigeons come home with the unerring certainty of my literary efforts. I kept the bombardment up so long and so persistently that I firmly believe lots of those stories would have found their way home by themselves

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if the postman had only let them loose in Fleet Street ; yet a day came when I sold them all, and very often to the selfsame journals which had rejected them, often, too, with caustic and not very complimentary remarks.

My first book was published in Australia and sold like ripe figs, but I never got enough out of it to buy a collar for a dog. Sometimes I wonder where publishers go to when they die. I cannot believe they go to heaven ; I hope they don't go to the other place, I don't like the idea of having to meet them again.

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I joined my first theatrical company in quite an informal way ; having drifted into a backblock town, I discovered that a touring company under the control of Mr. Billy Wurmser had arrived, and intended to play anything and everything from Shakespearean drama to light comedy. Billy Wurmser was a genius and a very great genius too, but he was as irresponsible as a hatching hen. The mood of the moment governed his life, and his moods were as the sands by the seashore when the winds blow.

The township where Wurmser had located his

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company was nearly as erratic as Billy himself ; it was situated on the banks of the river Murray and most of the year it was dull to deadliness, but when the wool-shearing commenced, then it woke to life with a vengeance. The shearers would come trooping in on their way to the big sheep stations where hundreds of thousands of animals were waiting to be shorn. They were as wild and wicked a set of blades as ever lived, those shearers. Some of them came in river steamers ; some on their own hacks ; hundreds tramped in, carrying their swags.

There were no trains, and the men seldom had much money ; they had wasted in riotous living what they had made the previous year and in the intervening months whilst they worked as odd men on cattle runs. By the time the shearing was over those men would have big cheques, and the publicans and gamblers laid in wait for them like wolves, to plunder their pockets. This was not their only danger, for mingling in their ranks were professional prize fighters, professional runners, card-sharpers and horse-racing sharps of the lowest type. These gentry used to pose as bona fide working men ; they did a little shearing, worked as cooks and as general utility hands, and

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were always on the look-out for a chance to make boxing, running or horse-racing matches. Often the biters got bitten, for some of the better class shearers rode hacks that were real thoroughbreds and had often cost the savings of years. They never groomed them, and their rough coats in a measure hid their quality. It was the same in regard to fighting and running ; many of the lusty shearers could fight with gloves or bare knuckles quite well enough to hold their own with the professionals, and some of the very best battles ever fought in Australia took place in some shearing shed and went unchronicled in the Press. It was in that way that both Joe Goddard and Frank P. Slavin first became known to fistic fame ; they fought professionals and found they could beat them, and then took to the game as a business.

When the township was full of shearers returning citywards with pockets well lined, it was sheol on earth. The bars were full of half-drunken men ready to drink or quarrel on the faintest pretext. The gambling dens were never idle, sharpers—or ‘spielers’ as they term them in the antipodes—were thick as pebbles on a beach, rigging the thimble and the pea ; handing out the three-card

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trick or running ' heading schools,' the same being a gamble by means of tossing two pennies on a stick and betting heads or tails—a very simple game to look at, but a filed or loaded penny when deftly thrown by an expert will come down which ever way the ' spieler ' wants it.

Quack doctors, cheap jacks, and all kind of get-rich-easy gentry were at work, high and low. The giddy feminine element was supplied by an alleged vaudeville company ; the lady members of which were a rather worn-looking lot of *passé* young women who affected much paint and cheap finery. They were all stars—on the playbills, and according to the same authority most of them had performed before royalty in some foreign clime ; it may have been true, but they did not look it, in fact many of them looked as if they knew more about police courts than any other kind of court. There is a lot of rubbish written by novelists concerning the innate chivalry of men of that class towards women of the sort I mention ; the shearers did not waste any sentiment upon them, though in some cases they wasted a good deal of money ; they may have been knights-errant in disguise,—if so, they disguised the fact wonderfully well ; they

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were often coarse and common, not infrequently brutal in their dealings with the tawdry stars of vaudeville. I do not think I am overshooting the mark, when I say that after much experience in many lands, England included, men mostly are at heart selfish brutes towards women ; there is a lot of chivalry in print, but not much in actual life. Some of the more hardened of the women got their own back occasionally, but it was hell with the lid off for the novices.

The theatrical company was a staid, sober, respectable affair, bent on legitimate business, and I made inquiries as to a possible chance of an engagement. I had read all I could lay hands upon that Shakespeare had written, and had a fairly intimate knowledge of the works of Sheridan, Goldsmith and other notables, and learning that the manager had dispensed with the services of his second leading man, because that gentleman had drunk himself into such a condition that he persisted in believing he was Henry VIII reincarnated, and had buffeted an unoffending policeman under the ear because the man in uniform had not done him reverence in the street. Likewise he had called the magistrate a scurvy knave and had

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threatened to 'spit' him like a lark with the blunt end of an ancient umbrella. The magistrate being a good fellow, who knew what backblock whisky could do, sent the Thespian to the hospital to get his blood cooled before he began to see snakes or fancy himself a Bashi-bazouk with a mission to slay.

I presented myself to the great Billy Wurmser and applied for this actor's job. I told Billy it was not the salary I wanted so much as the fame, and intimated I could live on fame and the smell of an oil rag, and was depressed when William told me that in seasons of financial chaos I'd very probably have to live on less.

'Come round in a couple of hours and I'll see what you can do,' he added, and in two hours to the tick I was there. The company had just finished a rehearsal of *The Moor of Venice*; they took their seats as I entered. Wurmser pointed to the stage and I went on, dressed in cord riding breeches, top boots and spurs, a red shirt and slouch hat, and gave 'em *Hamlet*.

It had always been my theory that the Prince of Denmark was as mad as a moon-struck rabbit, with lucid intervals at meal times, and I played him as a maniac and I played him well. I knew

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at the time I was doing big business, because Wurmser was weeping, and the whole company was so overcome they had stuffed their fingers in their ears. After *Hamlet* I threw them scraps from *The School for Scandal*, *Richard the Third*, *Dick Turpin's Ride to York* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. I had just got my second wind and was shaping at Gray's *Elegy*, when Wurmser rushed on the stage, threw his arms around me and, in husky tones, commanded me to stop. I never saw a man so overcome with emotion in my life ; there was no jealousy in that great soul, he hugged me to his manly bosom and told me I was great.

‘I’ve enjoyed you,’ he whispered, ‘as I never enjoyed anything since my last leading lady stole my Sunday trousers and pawned them to get a hat. Your portrayal of Hamlet would get you a life-long engagement—in any lunatic asylum on God’s green earth. You’re an actor, sir—not the artificial article made in the atmosphere of luxury or the forcing house of experience ; you’re born to the business. Irving couldn’t play Hamlet as *you* played him, if they gave him a kingdom, and I’m damned if I think he would if he could even, at that price. I’ve got the part for you, sir, the very part

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that nature and your talents fit you to adorn.' He wept again ; then broke from my embrace, thrust a large pail of paste into one of my hands and a big whitewash brush into the other, then pushing a big roll of theatrical bills under my arm he showed me on to the street. 'Go forth !' he shouted like a great old knight cheering a young warrior on, 'go forth and decorate the town, don't leave a hoarding or a corner post uncovered. Live for your art, young man, die for it, work for it ; I'll pay you half a crown a week, and you can eat all the paste left over in the bucket. At night you shall strut the boards—not as Hamlet, no, not as Hamlet ; at first, young sir, you shall have a stately part, full of gracious dignity, you shall come on dressed in a princely gown, you shall carry a silver salver and present a letter to the king and go off without a word. In time you may rise to fame, and in the end grow great enough to know how great a fool you are. I'm damned if I ever saw any one you couldn't give three laps in the mile and a beating.'

I did not quite grasp his meaning, but I grasped the paste pot and the brush and I decorated that town and many another whilst I was a Thespian.

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The princely robe I wore in my first part was in reality an ancient scarlet dressing-gown of Billy Wurmser's, tricked out with tinsel; the only princely thing about it was the beer stains down the front. I had connection with quite a few scratch companies at various times and took to wearing my hair long, until one evening when playing with a small touring company through the shearing sheds, the audience demanded their money back, and failing to get it, tried to take it out in scalps.

After that experience I forsook the histrionic art and went in for serious journalism as soon as an opportunity offered. Only once again did I become a Thespian; that was after I had made a nice little hard cash rise out of mining, then I wrote a play and took it out on tour. Naturally I played the lead—every young dramatist who writes a play wants to play the lead. When we started out I had a first-class wardrobe, apart from the various uniforms I used in the play; when the company disbanded itself in the far hinterland and faced towards the coast, all along my line of march the townships were marked in my memory by portions of my wardrobe parted with to obtain food and shelter. By the time my pal and I

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reached Warnambool, where they grow potatoes for export, we hadn't a rag that we dare part with, unless we painted our bodies black and posed as aboriginal sons of the soil.

We accepted an engagement at Warnambool, removing potatoes in sacks from the trucks to the steamboats, and for a long time afterwards any one only had to say 'potatoes' to either of us in order to get a fight. At last we stowed away in a potato craft and went forth to seek our fortunes. I parted with my actor pal at Sydney and never saw him again, until I met him in San Francisco, when he saved my life. I had been lecturing through California, and drifted, wet and miserable and hungry, into a saloon where he was acting as bartender—he gave me some sandwiches.

CHAPTER VII

JOURNALISM AS A PROFESSION

IN my youth Australia was the land of the derelict as far as journalism was concerned. Men from all climes, who through intemperance or other follies had blasted their careers in the old world or in North America, made for Australia. They often did splendid work when they were sober, but they set the young brigade a terrible example, for drunkenness came to be recognized as a sign of ability in literature. So many able men were chronic drunkards that the unthinking mob, unable to discriminate between cause and effect, took it for granted that no man could have the divine spark unless he was ultra fond of the devilish spirit. Many a lad of fine promise, following the example of the old brigade, went on the rocks and made shipwrecks of their lives through the bad example of the able old men whose training

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and skill they envied. Most of the best writers and greatest drunkards were English ; they were the forerunners of a fine literary school and a most damnable drinking habit. The younger generation of writers in the antipodes have emancipated themselves from the old ideas and have disassociated drink from ink ; they know that a man need not be drunk before he can formulate a sober idea. To-day the Australian and New Zealand journalist is the equal of any the world can produce, but he is woefully underpaid ; they have been so busy out that way developing the chances of brawn that brain has been neglected. This is easily understandable : muscle, so long shamefully treated in the old world, has run over the top of itself in the new land ; nothing else could be expected when the dynamic forces of manual labour met opportunity at the flood. All those things will right themselves in good time ; brain will surely come into its kingdom and work harmoniously with brawn, to the eventual good of the virile young nation. Old-world habitués say scornfully, that Australia has no idols except athletes ; that a statesman, poet, author, orator, ranks lower in public estimation than a pugilist, a cricketer or champion jockey.

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Perhaps it is so at present, but at all events the athletes are worthier idols than æsthetic weaklings who talk throaty gibberish, dress like fops and live like fools ; if Australia runs too much to athletics, the old world drifts too far towards sickly sentiment. The old-time Australian journalism erred on the side of ultra vigour, and I wonder now, looking back on those days, that some of us did not find an early grave.

My first real journalistic job came in this way. I was sitting at meat one evening with two friends, one a medical student, the other a racehorse trainer. We were all out of funds, and the landlady's callous neglect and stony-eyed insolence made us aware of the fact. The medical student remarked that there was an advertisement in one of the daily papers for an editor of a small paper in a frontier town. We talked it over and decided that we should all apply for the post ; our combined knowledge of practical journalism did not amount to more than the writing of stray articles—short stories and serials, but we had the glorious effrontery of youth, a wonderful asset, look at it how you will. We applied and I got the job, and at once appointed my horse-trainer friend as my

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city sporting correspondent and my medical student general correspondent on medical matters. They did not often get paid for what they wrote, but what they did get helped them along, and they turned out rattling good stuff.

Upon arriving at my destination I had a look round the township before calling at the office of my paper. It was a pretty place, as new townships go out that way, and I thought it would suit me for a time. At the office I met the proprietor, a dreary-looking person with a weeping eye and drooping mouth, the sort of fellow who would put headlines over his articles like this: 'We will die in the last ditch,' and then run like a scared hen if some tomtit of a townsman called on him in anger. He was the most dejected-looking person I had ever seen; he looked as if he had been out on a wet night and had never got properly dry.

I introduced myself as his new editor, and my youth appalled him just as if that was a complaint a fellow could not grow out of. When I asked him how soon I could commence my duties, he said as soon as I could get the previous editor to vacate the premises; in explanation he stated that the late editor had entrenched himself in the sanctum

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and refused to remove himself, and I soon saw that I was expected to do the 'removing.' A nice start truly for a youth who loved peace.

The editorial sanctum was next to the printing office ; it had been built for a shop, and had a big plate-glass window, the proprietor having intended to run a stationer's and fancy goods store in conjunction with the paper. I opened the door and walked in and found there was plenty of 'fancy' goods in view, the chief of which was the editor. He was a very big man with a face like a cheese that had been partly painted red. He sat on the table and faced the plate-glass window, which had a dirty calico sheet tacked in front of it to keep passers-by from seeing into the sanctum. A bottle, half full of rum, was on the table beside him ; an enamel cup was clenched in his hands. He hadn't shaved for a month, and his big pale blue eyes were bulging. There were signs of intellectual power still left on the sodden face, and I afterwards learnt that his name had once been a thing to conjure with in London. Bottles of all sorts were strewn around the place ; a couple, which had half-burnt candles in them, were evidently the sanctum's chandeliers. It was hard to

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believe that Oxford had once been inordinately proud of this bloated, half-bestial looking thing, yet so it was.

I approached him warily, because a compatriot had told me he had thrown three men, who had come to take his place, into the street, after performing certain unholy rites upon them which need not be specified. He did not answer when I addressed him, but turned his bulging eyes on the proprietor, who instantly shot into the street and took up a strong strategic position behind a lamp post. The compositors told me that the last time the proprietor went into the sanctum, he came out by the drain in a most dishevelled condition and took his meals on the roof until darkness draped the earth. I began to understand why he did not look cheerful. Suddenly, without a word, the big man, sitting on the table, hurled the cup in his hands at my head and missed ; he reached for the bottle at his side, but before he could get it I was with him. Had he been in condition, the moments that followed would have been very bad for me ; as it was, the dram-sodden wreck made the occasion unforgettable by the things he did to various parts of my anatomy. He was spouting Latin at the

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finish and I was spouting blood ; the room looked as if an avalanche had passed through it ; the table was overturned, the chairs smashed, books and papers littered the floor, ink splashed the walls. I went out, found the proprietor and resigned on the spot, and informed him I had come up to run a newspaper not a delirium tremens emporium. In the end a small boy, who acted as printer's devil, offered to get the big editor out, if I would guarantee to get him his wages, which were a month in arrears. I made that bargain with gladness.

The boy went with his two brothers to the river bank and came back with a box full of lizards and one iguana about a yard long ; the ' guana ' is the living image of an abbreviated alligator, but quite harmless. It is the great snake-killing reptile of Australia and can be found anywhere where there is water. The lad peered cautiously into the sanctum. The editor had put the table on its legs and was sitting cup in hand as when I first saw him ; he wasn't only on the edge of the table, but on the edge of D.T. as well. The boy pushed open the back door and pushed in a lizard ; it crawled near the editor. He laughed and wagged

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his head and laughed again, muttering: 'No, you don't, no you don't. I've seen 'em bigger'n that many a time.' The boy pushed in five or six more. 'All hallucination, all hallucination,' murmured the maniac, but he began to shift uneasily. The red-headed boy, who knew his job from A to Z by long experience in that office, loosed about a dozen more lizards; they crawled all over the place. The editor pulled his legs up and glared at them, comforting himself with many quotations from the classics. 'What is it Horace says about mental aberration through over stimulation of the brain,' he jibbered; but his voice was thick and his eyes bloodshot, he was fast losing faith in Horace.

The last lizard was in and the red-headed imp held a conference with his satellites—a bush-bred boy is hard to beat in matters of strategy—one of them fled and returned with a rabbit. Now if there is one thing a 'guana' likes better than a snake, it's rabbit. They pushed the bunny through the door and it began hopping about amongst the lizards; the maniac editor saw it and his jaw fell. He got right up on the table and began to spit like a cat. 'I—I—I've seen lizards before, oceans of 'em, and rats, millions of 'em, but never rabbits;

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this must be the real thing,—rum and whisky and brandy all mixed.’ The sweat was pouring out of him now. He got on his knees and watched the grey rabbit hop foolishly from point to point ; his lower jaw had dropped to his chest. ‘ What d-o-e-s old H-o-r-a-c-e say about this ? ’ He was searching in his half burnt-out brain for a solution when the boy loosed the iguana ; it was three feet long and could run like lightning ; it sighted the rabbit and darted forward. ‘ What d-o-e-s old H-o-r-a-c-e say ? ’ muttered the delirium-stricken journalist. Then his eyes fell on the ‘ guana ’ flashing towards the table, whilst the rabbit sat on its haunches and squealed the death squeal. The man never told us what Horace said. He never told us anything ; he just straightened up on the table, gave one inarticulate yell and dived through the plate-glass window into the street, and the last that was ever seen of him in that township he was racing along the railway track yelling about alligators and rabbits and every other animal in the Zoo. Then I took peaceful possession of my kingdom and for the first time in my life used the royal ‘ we ’ common to editors in my articles.

That first editorial job was a revelation to me ;

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it was like going behind the scenes of a theatre for the first time and seeing all the glammers of stage life rubbed off. I had no staff excepting the elder brother of the red-headed boy, who 'did' the police courts and everybody else he could get near. That lad was born in sin, shapen in iniquity, and the most seasoned liar I have ever met. He took to politics when he grew up and was a success; if he had kept out of gaol, he would have been premier. There was no need for any paper to keep a staff, if it employed Reddy Amos, for if he could not find news he made it. He had a genius for writing, and could get more cold common sense into a three-line paragraph than most leader-writers could put in a column of small type; but he had no conscience, he would manufacture a birth or a death, a fire, flood or famine. When found out in a most flagrant lie he never turned a hair, but remarked calmly that if the event hadn't happened, it ought to have happened, and anyway it probably would occur in a week or two's time, and claim that he had only intelligently anticipated the event. He would work all day and every day and half the night and was always cheerful, and there was nothing under heaven he would not turn into 'copy.'

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The local council elections were in progress when I took charge of the paper, and 'Reddy' wrote a description of all the candidates and their chances ; he wrote it in a sporting vein, describing the candidates as horses entered for a race. He got that description into the paper after I had left for the night, cheerfully putting my initials, O.K.-ing the 'copy' on the bottom of the screed. The compositors were all too drunk at that time of night to tell my initials from a bar of soap, and the article went to press. In it, Reddy described one candidate for municipal honours as a 'fine animal, sure to win the mayoral cup, as his training expenses had been paid by a lady of unquestionable charm, but very doubtful morals.' A big tow-headed Irish publican who was married and had sixteen children, Reddy pithily portrayed as 'a chestnut gelding good for anything in public, but very nervous at home in his stable.'

I read that article in bed next morning and decided to go to the office by the back way. I was glad afterwards that I did. I got in by the back door and left by the back window ; the front of the premises was filled by the wife of the candidate who had been described as a 'chestnut gelding'.

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and her sixteen children. She had the proprietor in a corner of my office and wanted to know if the description was true, how he accounted for the sixteen children? Reddy came in and explained that I was the most profound Latin scholar of the age and had written the article in the dead languages, but the office being out of that kind of type the compositors had made a free translation—hence the mistake. Then he flattered her by telling her the greatest scholar of the period had written a whole column about her in the language of the classics. The husband came on the scene and the language *he* used was not dead, neither was it classical; but it was nothing to the eloquence of the mayoral candidate who had been described as having been trained by the lady of easy morals.

I took a vacation for a week and applied for a job as a football trainer—I felt it would be easier than editing a paper—but had to fall back on journalism in the end; folks said any fool could edit a paper, but it required brains to train a football team. My faith in Reddy had been shattered at the outset, but he was a wonder in his way. There was no lack of talent to be had; men drifted in from Heaven knows where, remained a

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week, and went, the Lord knows how, to some other town. Some were young, some old, all of them could write, or nearly all; they put in their copy and took a couple of shillings for thirst-quenching purposes, the rest they took out in orders on boot makers, boarding-house keepers, publicans and sinners who advertised in the paper; they came like dreams and left like nightmares. The compositors were the same; they never remained long and they were always good workmen—when they were sober enough to stand up to the ‘case.’ Sometimes they would reel in and ask to be tied up to the case, and Reddy would tie them up, place a can of beer within easy reach, give them their copy and they would set the type with shaking fingers and bloodshot eyes, smoking their clays and making the composing room reek.

I had to write the articles, ‘read’ the proofs, and watch Reddy’s copy. This latter part was the hardest, for the imp had a devilish cleverness that made it difficult to tell when he was faking; and when the paper went to press I often had to take turns with Reddy and the proprietor, turning the handle of the old printing machine, or after all our brain fag there would have been no paper, for it

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was hard to get a man to turn the handle of that old Wharfedale. We had no engine; the work had to be done by manual labour, and the men we got for the work were of the vagrant class who took their wages out in beer. Sometimes they would sit on the handle and talk politics; sometimes they would shed their garments and offer to fight all hands; then Reddy, who was the best all-round lad I ever saw, would pick up a spanner from under the old Wharfedale and improve the shining hour; after which he and I and the lachrymose proprietor would turn the handle and print the paper. When it was his 'off spell,' Reddy would sit on a whisky case and tell yarns that would make a Tommy Atkins put his head down a hole and blush, and the proprietor, who inclined to religion, would sack him every night, a thing that did not worry Reddy in the least; he took the 'sack' as he took his daily dip in the river and enjoyed both. He was a born young blackguard; but he had his good points, and I doubt if the paper would have lasted a month without him. He canvassed for advertisements and got them for the paper where no other living human being could have obtained them; he had the private history

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of every man in the township at his fingers' ends, and I think this helped him a lot when canvassing for 'ads.' Every policeman for miles around knew Reddy and loved him for his ingrained devilment. I think he had more cheek than any human being that ever existed.

On one occasion he got hold of a half-crazy wool-sorter who had been a scholar in England before he became a drunkard and a derelict. This man had translated from the German a great number of Goethe's best poems. Reddy obtained possession of them and boldly put his name to every blessed masterpiece and served them up to me as originals. I did not know any more about Goethe than I knew about the lost languages of the Aztecs, but was deeply impressed by the profundity of the thoughts the poems conveyed. Reddy said he didn't know how he wrote those poems; he said he had fits at times, and when the fits were coming on he felt he must write or burst, so he wrote; he added meekly that he thought the poems were mostly bosh himself, but said his mother would like to see them in print; so into print the work of the greatest of the Germans went, over the name of Reddy Amos. Some people at once cut off their sub-

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scriptions, and many letters came in jeering at the bush genius ! scarcely any one saw any merit in the poems, until the crank who had translated them wrote in and exposed the fraud. Then the letters praising the poems came in so fast and so thick that the postmen struck, and the authorities said that if we wanted our mail we'd have to send a van for it every day, or come and fetch it.

None of those letters praised Reddy ; he asked permission to write an article in self-defence and getting my sanction wrote a column that deserved to live for ever. He was not a bit abashed over his exposure, but said he had stolen Goethe's work to show that ninety-seven per cent. of the public were sheep, and the other three per cent. couldn't read. He said in his article that if Will Shakespeare came along to-day and wrote under the name of Bill Smith, the public would call his writing piffle, and vote it not worth printing room ; but as it was known as Shakespeare's, they'd vote it sublime. He left poetry and soared into the realms of art, stating that folks fell down and worshipped the ' Old Masters,' whilst not one in a thousand could tell an Old Master from a gin and soda advertisement, till the catalogues made the

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difference plain to them, and he ventured the assertion that even the city critics could not tell the difference between a sunset by Correggio from a bonfire on Guy Fawkes' night. I don't think Reddy knew who Correggio was, and I'm jolly sure I did not, but I knew his reasoning was sound, so I printed it. Correggio might have painted fences and not sunsets for all I knew, but the simile was worth the risk. At the finish he said he was not ashamed of stealing Goethe's mantle; he'd have stolen his trousers if by so doing he could have exposed the fraudulent sham called public opinion. I am a much older man now, but I know the things Reddy wrote of the bush townsfolk would apply equally well to the folk in London and every other big city to-day. The world still throws stones at its living great and spends thousands erecting stones to its mediocre dead, for, living or dead, mankind loves mediocrity.

We got no regular pay in that office; whenever Reddy collected the money for an advertisement the proprietor doled out a little silver all round, the rest of the wages and salaries we took out as best we could in 'orders on tradespeople.' I would get an order on a grocer for a couple of pounds'

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worth of eatables ; this I would transfer to my landlady, and so my board was paid. I got clothing, boots and everything else in the same manner, and so did every one else when they got anything at all ; yet the life was not an unhappy one, or it would not have been if it had not been for the proprietor's wife ; she was twenty years younger than he, and fancied she was a genius. Reddy described her as a ' hen journalist ' ; every one else had a different description for her, and none were of a complimentary nature.

I do not know where the proprietor found her ; Reddy said he won her in a raffle and wished to heaven he'd lose her in the same way. She was the boss's second matrimonial venture ; he had taken to drink when his first wife died ; then sobered up and took to religion, which drove him into matrimony. Of the three complaints I think he'd better have kept to the liquor, for the hen journalist led him a devil of a life at home and at the office. She was rather good-looking and posed as an eccentric. In her office, which she called her ' den,' she smoked a clay pipe, and when meditating used to sprawl back in her chair and rest her heels on the table, principally I am certain because she had a pair of

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amazingly small feet. She had no more ability than a milch cow, but what she lacked in that direction she made up for in vanity. I have never seen her vanity equalled, even amongst men ; she always wanted her ' copy ' in the paper, no matter what else had to stand over, sad stuff it was too. Reddy used to take it and rewrite it most times and attach her *nom de plume*, and some of the stuff that limb of the devil used to put in concerning ladies' wearing apparel would have taken the roof off a church ; but the ' hen ' did not mind as long as it created a sensation and she got the credit. All Reddy knew about ladies' lingerie was gleaned from what he saw on the line on wash days ; his mother was a wash lady—when she was sober, which happened at intervals. It was when the hen took to writing political and sporting articles that the trouble really grew serious. We managed to keep most of her stuff out of print by having accidents with the type at the last moment, but some of it had to go in, and then the ungodly chuckled. It was a pet pose of hers that she was pursued by half the male Lotharios in the place, on account of her genius. Reddy and I often wrote her letters purporting to come from men miles

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away in the hope of getting her to keep fictitious appointments, and so be rid of her for a few hours. We did this so often that she took to wearing a 'gun' in her belt, declaring that she was not safe in a district where masculine passions rioted through the post. My own honest belief was, and is, that she fervently hoped some fool in trousers would come along and waylay her; I know I devoutly hoped that some idiot would abduct her.

In the end I stooped to flattery, telling her that genius of such high order was wasted on mere journalism, and persuaded her to write a novel. She fell into that trap, and peace reigned in the office for a while. She had not brains to invent a plot for her story, but Reddy went to the rescue and I supplied the dialogue; this compelled me to be with her a good deal and she began to hint that her husband was jealous of me, thinking I had designs upon her. I had too—with an axe. When she had worked a month on the novel she informed us that she was coming back into journalism, as she wanted to expose some spiritualists who were visiting the town. Reddy and I held a conference, and decided that back into journalism she should not come in that office. I left all the details to Reddy.

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The 'hen' went to three or four spiritualistic séances and informed us she was going to expose the whole show as a fraud. Reddy begged her to go just once more before commencing the attack and she consented. The night was dark and stormy. I accompanied the 'hen' to the séance, having arranged with Reddy that I would bring her back to the office via a long stretch of open ground in which small swamps, many bushes and big puddles filled in the scenery. The séance was most cheerful; it took place in a ruined Methodist chapel, close to a disused cemetery. The professor and the 'medium' had chosen this delectable spot presumably because the 'spooks' to be interviewed would not have far to travel from the cemetery. Fifteen people who paid half-a-guinea each were present. I know of my own knowledge there was one genuine spirit there, because I took it myself—in a flask.

We had quite a good time, murderers and their victims, suicides and other cheerful folk came from beyond the veil to tell us the general geography of spook land. One amiable old ruffian who spoke in a deep bass voice and called himself John King, the pirate, came from shadowland and talked

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platitudes, and then went back to whence he came. We saw ghostly hands and faces, blue lights, crosses and other symbols and left with a nice creepy feeling in our spines. The 'hen' clung to my arm as I piloted her across the God-forsaken swampy flat. All the way I talked of murders I had known and read about, and a few I invented, until I could feel her heart bumping against my arm. Suddenly my own began to bump, for an eerie laugh, followed by a long-drawn wail, like a soul in torment, came on the wings of the night. I had been so long inventing murders, that I had quite forgotten Reddy, and I think I hugged the 'hen' almost as hard as she hugged me. The night was as black as the inside of a horse, the wind wailed drearily, the rain was falling in big splashes—something came through the bushes on my left front and stood in our path—something that gleamed and growled; I felt wet all over! The 'hen' tried to put her head inside my overcoat, and I would have gone down a rabbit burrow if I'd known where to find one. Reddy had covered the head and face of his bulldog with luminous paint, and had sprung it on us in the marsh. It was the ugliest devil of a dog I ever saw in day-

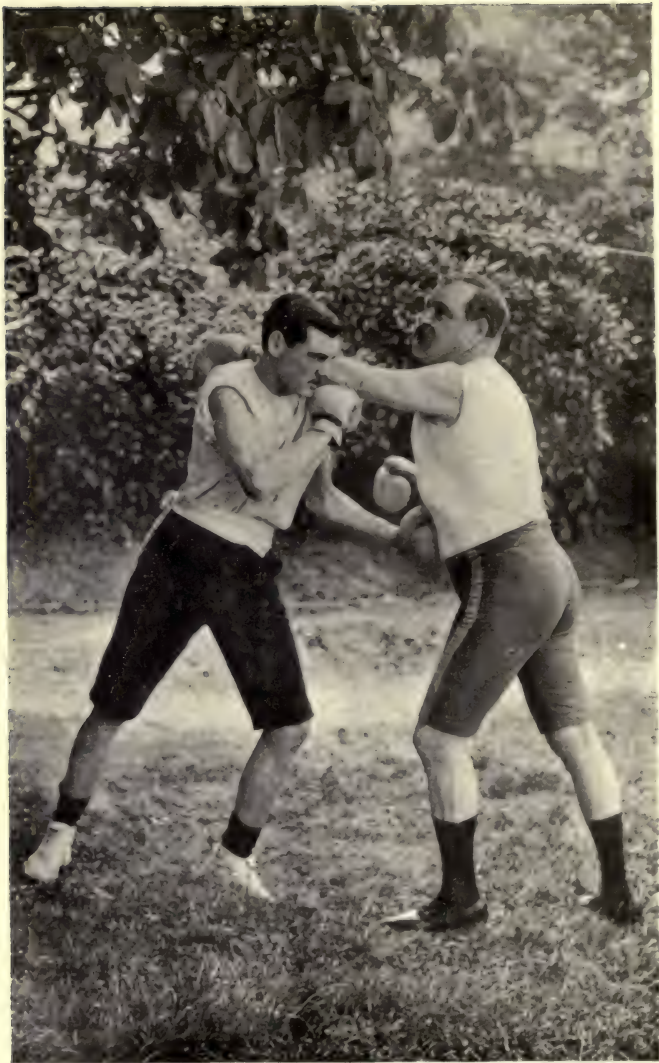
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light, but seen like that it was a nerve shatterer. The 'hen' wheeled to the right to run, and fell back in my arms yelling like a prima donna on her top note. When I saw what had scared her I guess I joined the chorus; a face was peering at us through the right-hand bushes—it had long horns of pale blue flame, a long livid face and a short beard. Reddy had confiscated the family goat and had illuminated it for the occasion. Then a babel of sound broke out—gleaming faces appeared all round us; it was Reddy and all his brothers and sisters, with his half-drunken mother, with luminous paint all over them. Reddy had got himself up to represent the devil, in crimson tights, and the red fire he had obtained from a travelling theatrical show made him look the part to perfection. If the devil does look anything like Reddy looked, then I'm in for some sleepless nights in the hereafter.

I bolted one way, the 'hen' fled another, and then suddenly I remembered Reddy and went back, feeling very foolish; but I did not find the 'hen'—she was home, under the bed, and as long as I was on that paper no one ever saw her out of doors after dark. The strangest thing about it all was

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that though Reddy told the story near and far, no one believed his version ; to this day they call the spot 'the haunted marsh.' I wonder what they would have called it if they'd seen the bulldog, and the goat, and Reddy's whisky-sodden mother with her tousled hair streaked with artificial flame.



Youth will be served. Son Wallie repaying a former lesson.

CHAPTER VIII

I TAKE SERIOUSLY TO BOXING

ALL my life I have been fond of boxing, but in my younger days there was no chance for a lad to learn unless he lived in Melbourne or Sydney, and I was never a city man. There was always plenty doing in the mining and cattle camps in the rough-and-ready style, without gloves, but that is of very little use as a school for boxing, as I was to discover in a way that left many impressions upon me, both outwardly and inwardly.

At the period I write of, Australia owned two really wonderful fighters—Larry Foley and Peter Newton. The former was middle and heavy weight champion of New South Wales, with both knuckles and gloves, the latter the champion of Victoria in both styles, and each claimed to be champion of Australasia. This question of supre-

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macy was never properly settled, but unquestionably they were the two best men of their time in the great sub-continent.

I drifted down from a prospecting expedition to a town where Peter Newton was giving exhibitions of boxing with Mick Nathan, an Irish Jew who was a wonder with his hands. In an evil moment it entered my head to try conclusions with the redoubtable Peter Newton, to find out if I was any good at the game. He was giving a show, and Nathan invited all and sundry to step into the arena and sample the goods. I volunteered, and was taken to a room and arrayed in fighting uniform. I did not know it, but I was a salad being dressed for the eating. Nathan, who dressed me, asked what experience I'd had, and I told him the truth, 'Well,' he said, 'you're a husky young chap and fit as a fiddle; don't take any liberties and you'll be all right. Peter's not a bad sort when you know him.'

A little later I arrived at the opinion that Peter was a very bad sort when you knew him. I was introduced to the audience as a 'friend of Peter Newton's from the country.' If he treated all his friends as he treated me, I can easily understand it

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if they remained in the country and as far away from him as they could get.

We shook hands. He was a Kay-legged man with a clean-cut, rather handsome face, grim mouth and steady cruel eyes. At the word 'go' I slipped across the ring and shot my left, with all the power I had, straight on to his nose, and he sat down with a thud. The people yelled with delight; Mick Nathan, outside the ring, clung to the ropes and laughed joyously. Newton rose quickly; so did the lumps on my face. Again and again he sent me on my back with his left hand, and if I'd had the sense of a rabbit, I would have remained there and shammed a fit; all the world seemed to me to have suddenly turned into a boxing glove, not an ordinary boxing glove, but one that had got drunk in some mysterious way and gone mad. When I retreated, it followed me; when I rushed, it stopped me; if I ducked down, I met that glove coming up; when I side-stepped, I met it on the swing; when it was not in my face it was in my stomach; wherever there had been a lump on me he made a hole, and where there had been a hollow he made a lump. The fight fans yelled advice: 'Swing your right!' 'Hook him with your left!' 'Duck!'

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I did it all, only when I should have been ducking I was swinging ; only one man in the crowd gave me sensible advice :

‘ Run, you young fool, or he’ll kill you ! ’ he shouted ; but the pride that goes before a beating was strong upon me : I hoped to get one good one home on that sphinx-like face with my right hand and even up the tally. I made a desperate lunge with the left for his stomach ; his right came up from the hip and I went up amongst the chandeliers,—at least that’s how it felt,—I wondered I did not make a hole in the roof with my head. In the fourth round he seemed to hit me in seven different places at once, and the ring became a catherine wheel ; it began to race round me like a merry-go-round ; the solid floor rocked about like the Bay of Biscay and three or four hundred Peter Newtons were walking round in the storm doing rude things to me ; then good-natured Micky Nathan jumped through the ropes, picked me off my feet and carried me to the dressing-room.

‘ You’re game enough, kid,’ he said, ‘ but you haven’t got the sense of a tree turtle. What made you hit *him* on the nose like that ? ’

‘ I wanted to know how it felt,’ I answered.

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He grinned. 'Well,' said he, 'I guess you know now, don't you?' and I did. I was always of an inquiring turn of mind, but I never made any more inquiries of Peter Newton.

Boxing has always fascinated me, and I have seen and chronicled battles in which some of the world's greatest gladiators took part and have seen some funny things. The funniest happened when a giant of a man landed in South Australia in my very callow days. He straightway took possession of the town; he called himself the Champion of the Pacific Slope, and spoke with a strong American flavour. His enormous bulk, scarred visage, and forbidding expression made him look a terror. He issued a challenge to the earth in general, offering to whip any man living in three rounds for £100. All the local sports gave him the side walk and he ruled the athletic end of the city with a rod of iron. No dog dared bark in his presence; his portrait in fighting costume was in every shop window, and the home-brewed boxers mentioned his name under their breath. Finding no one to fight him, he became a bookmaker at the pony meetings and was fast laying up treasure.

One day a drunken sailor joked him; he struck

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the sailorman a ponderous blow and broke his shoulder ; after that the most truculent did him reverence, until one night in the saloon bar of the Theatre Royal he teased a quiet youngster of less than eleven stone until flesh and blood could stand it no longer, and the lad turned and a fight commenced. The moment the Colossus put his hands up in earnest, his mantle fell from him and he stood confessed the rankest impostor that ever hoaxed a public. He could not fight enough to whip a tinned salmon ; a wooden-legged man with a glass eye could have thrashed him in a round, and he was an arrant coward to boot. He left the city without beat of drums next day, and I learnt that he had been a ' bounder ' in San Francisco, and made his living there going through the clothes of drunken sailormen in low lodging-houses and drinking dens. Those terrible scars on his face, which he had described so often and so eloquently as scars won in honourable battles, and his kinked and dented nose, had all come to him when a negress in Tar Flat, ' Frisco, who took in washing had knocked him down and beaten his face with a flat iron, and on those scars he had travelled through all the treaty ports of China, and all the

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South American ports and towns, and had even dared to bluff an Australian city. Later he returned to America and got a good living challenging John L. Sullivan, Frank P. Slavin, Jake Kiliam and Peter Jackson, but he never stopped long enough in any one place to let them get at him.

He once met Charlie Mitchell, the King Pin of all British fighters, in Chicago, and began to 'talk' of a match. Charlie sized him up in one swift second with unerring instinct and promptly kicked him on to the side walk. As soon as he rose he made for the railway track like a startled steer, and when last heard of he had on his printed record, 'one round draw with Charlie Mitchell, Champion of the World.'

Once when I was athletic editor of the *Sydney Referee*, the greatest sporting paper in the antipodes, an alleged boxer blew in from nowhere in particular looking for the loser's end of a purse. He gave his name as Jim Hennessey, and when I asked him for his credentials, he showed me a cutting from an American newspaper, in which John L. Sullivan was reported to have said: 'Jim Hennessey was the only man he was ever afraid of.' As I happened to know John L., I knew that it was Jim Hennessey,

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the manufacturer of brandy, he was referring to. Real fighters are pretty good fellows, quite as decent as ordinary men in other callings ; it is the ' hobo ' element that hang on to the game, who discredit it. I have met and talked with the best part of the crackajacks of all weights, of all countries, during the last thirty years, and know they live clean and play the game more squarely than a big percentage of business men and professional men who claim to be immaculate.

The most recklessly fearless of them all was Charley Mitchell ; the hardiest was Joe Goddard. In his prime, you could hit him with a sledgehammer until it bounced. The hardest hitter of my day was John L. Sullivan ; the coolest in a ring was Jim Hall, you had to wear furs near his corner to keep from getting a chill. Jim Mace was the cleverest boxer I ever looked at, and young Griffo of Australia the cleverest fighter. He had not a punch, yet he whipped all the punchers. Fitzsimmons was a great combination of power, stamina and speed, more crafty than clever, a man who always did the unexpected thing in a fight, and what he did was deadly. Peter Jackson was a fine, clean, straight fighter and straighter man, a

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model for the athletic world in the ring or out of it, he was every inch a man. Jim Corbett and Kid McCoy were far and away the two ablest exponents of boxing I saw in America, and Dick Burge one of the most dashing and daring in any country, a little man who whipped big men as easily as eating a lunch. England to-day has not a champion in the heavy class, but she can turn out more real good men up to ten stone than all the rest of the world combined. Georges Carpentier, the hope of France, will never be champion of the world this side of doomsday, but he is a game and resolute fighter who has not been spoiled by insane Press laudation. He is one of nature's gentlemen. The one great boxer I missed seeing was the ill-fated Les Darcy, a phenomenon who was hounded out of his own country by fools.

A few weeks ago John L. Sullivan fought his last fight, and was knocked out by the champion of all champions, Old Grey Death, who, sooner or later, sends 'one across' to all of us. When I knew John L. he was the most talked-of athlete the world had known, and I think more lies were written concerning him than of any gladiator

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ancient or modern, for he had many enemies amongst the riff-raff of journalism who tried to exploit him, and failing to do so, dipped their pens in gall. John was the centre-piece of countless stories, some of which were true, some fabricated. Here is one. When John L. was in his glory, and his terrific punch was the terror of the pugilistic world, a young man who moved in the upper circles of New York society and had more money than sense, made a wager that he would cuff John L.'s ears in a public saloon. He was a young giant, and an amateur athlete of no mean order, and had imbibed the idea that he would have a chance even with the Boston terror. He and his friends drove up to a saloon frequented by John L. and found the champion leaning against the bar, smoking a green cigar and dallying with a glass of cognac.

‘You are John L. Sullivan,’ said the amateur.

‘Got it first guess,’ was the reply, as John ran his eyes over the splendid proportions of his brusque interrogator.

The two young giants looked each other over, and then the amateur deliberately slapped the professional's face. With the spring of a tiger,

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Sullivan was upon him—biff—bang—biff—biff, went the fists that had cleaned up the world of pugilism. They took the amateur to the hospital, and John returned to a fresh cigar and cognac. Three months later the misguided youth, still very much of a wreck, was being driven home from the hospital, and passing the saloon, decided to call in and apologize to the gladiator. He entered, leaning upon two sticks and wobbling in his gait as if he had paper legs. He found John L. at the same old bar, and approached him gingerly. Holding out one stick at arm's length, and leaning heavily on the other, the wrecked amateur queried :

‘ Do you remember a man slapping your face three months ago in this bar, *Mr. Sullivan* ? ’

‘ I do,’ growled John in his deepest bass, ‘ —and so does he.’

‘ He does, *Mr. Sullivan*, he does ; I’m that man.’

John’s brows came down in a heavy frown, and the wreck backed away like a crayfish that has seen a net in a boy’s hand.

‘ It was a joke, *Mr. Sullivan* ; on my honour, it was a joke,’ he protested.

John L. took the cigar from his teeth and held out his saddle flap of a hand.

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‘A joke, mister, of course it was a joke, and a damn good job for you that I understood and treated it as a joke; but don’t try it again, I’m not always playful.’

In his day John’s little finger was thicker than any other man’s loins as a fighter, with the solitary exception of Charlie Mitchell, whose trickiness and ring-craft offset John’s leonine strength.

There was one great point in Sullivan’s character : he was absolutely incorruptible ; the money was not minted that could make him ‘throw’ a fight, and he was only beaten once—his last fight, when clever Jim Corbett persuaded him into making a match long after his fighting days were over. Just prior to one of his important battles, five big sporting men called at John’s training quarters and offered him a colossal sum to throw the fight and let the other man win ; they were husky men and felt secure in their numbers. John listened gravely and seemed sorely tempted by the enormous amount of the bribe.

‘You can have another match with the same chap in three months’ time, and whip him,’ insinuated one of the conspirators.

‘I’m thinking of my reputation,’ growled John.

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‘ Well, you can go sick and make that an excuse for being beat,’ came the ready response.

‘ Do I look sick ? ’ thundered John. ‘ Why, I never was as well as I am at this hour ; the sick game won’t wash. I can only see one way out, I must have a dust-up with a gang and get hurt.’

The tin horn gamblers were delighted ; they said it was the very thing—a rough-and-tumble fight in which he was to strain his back, but not badly enough to prevent him going on with the battle for the championship, otherwise their bets would be off. The tin horns were not so delighted when he suggested *they* should provide the rough house and do the crippling, but they were five to one, and John promised to be a lamb, so they waded in. John was in the pink of condition, and in the flower of his mighty manhood. The kind of lamb he proved to be must have made those tin horns hate mutton for the remainder of their lives : when the rough house was over, one was stretched insensible on the floor, one was moaning in a corner, nursing his broken ribs, another was under the table yelling for help, and the other two were up on the rafters, trying to butt a way out through the skylight. A fortnight later

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he won his championship battle in the ring.

Charlie Mitchell, the Britisher who was such a thorn in John L.'s side, was possibly the most perfectly made man I ever saw. At his heaviest, he never scaled more than eleven stone six; he was about that weight when he fought his famous bare knuckle draw in France with Sullivan, which lasted about three hours and twenty minutes, but he won countless battles against big men when less than ten stone seven. He was a man of a very high order of intelligence; well educated, and would have made a success of life had he been either a soldier or an actor instead of a prize-fighter. He died a few weeks after John L. passed away. I do not think he ever realized what fear meant. Strangely enough, his only defeat came to him in his last fight, and it was Jim Corbett who did the trick, but Mitchell, like John L., was a back number when he met Corbett, and the less said about it the better.

I spent six weeks with him when writing his life, and whatever he may have been in his youth, and I knew him when he was as wild as a hawk, in those later days he was as stately and as courteous as a Supreme Court judge, and a perfect host. I

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could fill a book with yarns I have heard concerning Charlie Mitchell. One that went the rounds of the town in his wild days was as follows : A wealthy sporting celebrity who used to back him, died rather suddenly. Charlie was with him when he passed away, and brought the sad news home to the dead man's only relative.

'Tell me, Mr. Mitchell, what were the very last words my poor brother said?' demanded the relative.

'The very last words,' said Charlie musingly, 'the very last words—no, I don't like to tell you, you might not believe me.'

'But, Mr. Mitchell, I insist, you really must tell me. I—I shall treasure those last words—tell me.'

Charlie drew a deep breath and brushed a tear from his stern eyes.

'Well, if you insist——' Again he paused.

'I do, I really do insist.'

'Well, the last words your dear brother ever uttered were, "Good-bye, Charlie, tell 'em to give you £10,000 out of my estate."'

He never got it. He was a very liberal man to those whom he considered worthy. I was walking

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with him towards a cab-rank in Brighton one miserable wet winter's night, when a man stuck us up with a hard-luck story, said he had tramped miles that day in search of work and had neither bed nor food. Promptly Charlie Mitchell drew out a couple of half-crowns and held them out to the mendicant, who instantly broke into a torrent of praise, saying, 'The instant I spotted you, I knew you was two sporting gents of the right sort.' Back went the silver into the old champion's pocket. 'That settles it, my lad; you know your patter too well for a working man; you're a flat catcher,' and he chuckled heartily at the storm of abuse that was hurled at us. He was a generous, kindly man, but he hated to be taken down by any kind of a sharp, and the men who tried to work on his vanity got mighty poor results, for he had not a particle of vanity in his composition. Peace to his soul, for whatever his faults, he left no bolder heart behind him in all the world. The very last time Charlie Mitchell pulled on a boxing glove he had them on with me, and re-enacted the lessons given a good part of a lifetime earlier. Then he pulled off the gloves, and bidding me put up my hands, went through all the great punches



The last lesson Charlie Mitchell ever gave.—He said his foot slipped.

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with which he won his most famous battles in the prize-ring:

In these leaves from my life I do not propose to touch much upon the sporting element, though sport has played no small part in my career. Racing, cricket, football, in fact almost every phase of strenuous effort between man and beast, has always had a charm for me. Possibly I have played cricket of sorts in more countries than any man living, but as man or boy I found life too hard to devote much time to the king of summer games. George Giffen taught me all I know, and he was the greatest player I ever saw. I have played in Australia on new mining camps, where the wickets were made by hacking down bushes and levelling the ground with a hoe and a spade an hour or two before the match; those rough-and-ready matches were always good—especially for the doctors and chemists. In Africa during the last Boer war I often had a game with soldiers; once with a team of Kaffirs, who were opposed to a team consisting mainly of Basuto camp followers. It was a nice game, until our fast bowler, or rather thrower, launched a terrific ball, which landed in the stomach of a Basuto batsman. It would take a

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book to tell what the Basuto did to the Kaffir when he regained his wind, then the rest joined in with bats, stumps and knob-kerries. I got on top of an ambulance wagon and acted as umpire, and I stayed there till a squad of the Munster Fusiliers came down and cleared the ground.

Once in Australia I played against an aboriginal team. The darkies played barefooted ; they could not bowl to any extent, but could field like wizards ; and as for batting, they only knew how to hit. Their marvellous eyesight made it almost impossible to get them out, until I put on a fast bowler with orders to bowl Yorkers ; he was instructed to pitch the ball on the naked toes of the sons of Ham, and trust to providence for wickets. The ruse worked like magic ; his first ball took the great-toe nail off their best batsman, who went rolling over the ground with his toe in his mouth. I applied for 'leg before wicket.' 'Not out,' said the umpire. 'You're a liar,' sobbed the darkie, 'I'm out right enough,' and he limped off the ground to cut a sapling to wait for the bowler when the game was over. We won that match.

In Japan I got up a scratch match with ten Japs on both sides, an American baseball pitcher

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captaining one team, I operating for the other. I cut the first ball hard towards point ; the Jap shut his eyes, spread his hands out and stopped the ball with his head. This raised a riot, as every one swore I had done it on purpose, especially as they had seen the Yankee baseball pitcher motion the man to go just on the spot where he had got hit. The Japs finished the game in their own way and made their own rules as they went along. A lot of Western things may catch on in Japan, but cricket will not be one of them. Right in the shadow of the walls of old Pekin I had one game ; I knew it would not be a success, but wanted to play in China. I had to pay every man on both sides to take part. I batted all the afternoon, that was the only time I ever made a century. When the Chinamen did field a ball they threw it at me instead of at the wicket, being under the impression that a man was not out till he was hurt. After I had been batting a long time the policeman came with a doctor and publicly examined my head ; the medico after the examination gravely declared that in my childhood I must have been bitten by a dog with the rabies, that was why I liked running up and down in the sun and hitting a bit of leather

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with a bit of wood. They had brought the doctor to me for nothing, but it cost me quite a lot to get rid of him ; he was a Chinese scientist and wanted to lock me up in an old disused temple, to see if I would keep running all the year round.

Horse-racing was a pet weakness of mine ; I have been handicapper, judge and secretary of race clubs, also owner and part owner of race-horses, and liked the game in every phase.

The most successful day I ever had on a race-course was at a pony meeting in Tientsin, a Chinese treaty port. There were seven events on the card, and I backed every winner—with the help of my Chinese servant, who told me afterwards in Moscow with pride, that he, acting for a Chinese syndicate, had squared every race by doping all the horses that were not wanted to win. I rebuked him severely and he repented, and to prove his penitence doped me and got away with all my loose cash.

The weirdest horse-racing I ever saw took place at the Mongolian capital in the heart of the Gobi desert. There also I had a good win. I stood in with a priest who acted as judge, and backed what he told me to back. There was no race-course,

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just a stretch of open plain outside the city. It was the time of the annual horse fair, when nomads with herds of desert ponies flocked to the capital in their thousands to sell to the emissaries of the Chinese and Russian Governments the hardy little animals that had escaped the rigours of the wilderness, the fierce storms and the wolves. All kinds of Asiatic mixtures were there : Tartars, Cossacks, Chinese, Japs, Buriats, and many another tribe or nation. They came from Lake Baikal to Hong Kong and from Petersburg to Peking and all intermediate places. They came on dromedaries, on ponies, in panniers, and on foot, and they brought every mortal thing that Russia and the old East knows, to sell and to barter—tea, salt, snuff, tobacco, opium, silk, horses, goats, cattle, camels, and women, for women have a market value there and are sold like cheese. The women are graded like the horses and the cattle, not sold just because they are women. At just such a fair as this the late Dowager Empress of China was bought and sold, and she became the ruler of hundreds of millions of people, with power of life and death in her little yellow palms. Very little money changes hands, it is all or nearly all barter ; so much com-

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pressed tea, which is tea and salt pressed together in blocks, given for a woman, or so much silk, or so many horses. If the woman is very lovely, and some of those Oriental creatures are real dreams in their own way, then they are carried in palanquins or on dromedaries back to China to rule or be ruled in a Chinese harem. If she is only passably good looking she is bought by some merchant or trader to travel with him as his concubine. If they are of a very low grade they are sold as workmen's wives ; many are bought to fill the houses of infamy ; they have no say in the matter. Here is a thing for those who preach the existence of a personal God to explain—if they can. One thing I noticed very particularly was the fact that the Mongol priests by guile or force all managed to get hold of some good-looking girls. They were all supposed to be celibate, those priests of the great desert ; they travel from oasis to oasis always in the saddle, a warlike overbearing class of men, and I never saw one of them, though I crossed the desert from China to Siberia, who had not from five to six young women in his train. Celibates ! h'm yes, in their sleep or after death, not at any other time. They are to my mode of

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thinking the most unblushing set of scoundrels on this planet—those big brawny Mongol priests ; amongst other things they are sworn by their priestly vows not to eat meat, nor devour the flesh of any thing that has had life, for it is part of their creed that the life of bird or beast must not be taken ; a reptile must not be killed, even though it be poisonous ; yet I have seen in the great halls of the inner temple in Urga, the Mongol capital, where few white men's feet have trod, many hundreds of priests feeding together on beef alone. They had no knives nor forks, but gripped the big half-raw junks of beef in both hands and ate like wolves, the fat and juice of the rich meat dripping down their shaven faces and slobbering over their massive jaws and down their naked chests ; all the meat to feed these wastrels had been stolen from, or bullied out of, the nomadic peasants. I watched them eat like animals, and when filled to repletion these big hefty celibates lounged off to pass the time with their slave women. They are real rulers of all the land that lies like a buffer between China and Russia, and their name is legion. It is the rule of the temple that when a Mongol mother has a son

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—and the desert women begin bearing children when twelve years old—she may keep her first-born ; but when she has a second son, she is compelled to surrender either her first-born or his brother to the temple. At seven years old the boy becomes a priestling ; his early boyhood is passed in one of the temples, and if there are hells in the next world where vice in its most horrible and degrading form is practised or known in a greater degree than in the Mongol temples, then indeed God must be a myth, a figment of the imagination. These so-called shrines are cesspools of infamy ; all the world-old abominations of the old East flourish and putrefy there, and no power in that part of the earth can hold them in check, for the priests are an army, well horsed and all-powerful.

When the young priestling has served his full apprenticeship, he is let loose on his kind to prey on men and women alike. It has always been my hope since I saw those temples, that if ever an army sweeps that way with fire and sword, I may ride with them, for Sodom and Gomorrah knew no evil that is not common there. No priestling is ever allowed to mix with his own people after he has been entered at the temple ; he

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is dead to them and they to him ; but by getting one son from every family the Lamas or high priests get hold of the secrets of every family, for a boy of seven living in a tent with his relations knows pretty nearly all there is to know of his people's lives. He knows how many camels, cattle, horses or goats they possess, knows how many girls there are in the clan, knows the oases they frequent, the fairs they go to, the routes they take when travelling, and what he knows he must and does tell.

Let me get back to the horse-racing at the great fair. My Chinese servant, who would gamble his front teeth away, asked me if I would like to win something worth having ? Naturally I did not say him nay. He grinned, and said :

‘ Welly good business.’ He had been a steward on a ship trading to San Francisco, and what he did not know about ‘ Welly good business ’ was not worth worrying over.

‘ You go to the temple and make nice plesent to the big god when you have luck,’ he advised. I told him I was not going to give my good money to any wooden god, even though it was sixty feet high and decked out in sham jewellery. The pagan chuckled :

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‘ You no savee, I go wi’ you to temple, you give nice plesent to pleist, not to god. I show you which pleist to give to, good business savee.’

I was out for adventure and experience, and went. At the altar my Chinaman abased himself, knocking his forehead on the floor at the feet of the gigantic idol. A dozen priests stood near, a meaning look passed between one of them and my pagan, and the holy man drew near. John L. Sullivan would have looked a lily stem beside him, he was so massive. Yet he was quick as a cat in his movements and had the face of a Roman centurion.

‘ This welly holy man, give him nice plesent,’ whispered my heathen, and I did. The priest was delighted with the ‘ shoo ’ of silver I put in his hand ; he drew my pagan aside and conferred with him, and there, inside the temple at the feet of the idol, that very holy man, through my servant, made me an offer that would have got him six months under the White Slave Traffic Act in London.

Outside the shrine I said to my Chinaman :

‘ Say, who’s your big friend ? ’

He wagged his braided poll seriously at me, remarking :

‘ He welly holy man, you do good business

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to-day, that pleist judge of the races to-morrow.

It was excellent business as far as it went, though I had to disgorge another 'lil' plesent to the big priest, and in the end I won two rolls of silk, neither of which, I may add, ever reached their destination in England. Mighty little that you send by parcel post through China ever does reach its destination if it is of any value.

Concerning sculling I could write much if I had space, for I was fond of it and saw many of the great races in various parts of the world. The three most perfect oarsmen I ever looked at were Edward Hanlan of Toronto, Harry Searle of Australia, and Ernest Barry of England. At his very best, on his day out, Hanlan might have beaten Searle by an eyelash if they had ever met, but he would have had to be at his best to have done it. I must not attempt to mention the wonderful racehorses I have seen, for it would need a book. Carbine I consider the best I ever saw race.

CHAPTER IX

GOLD IN THE GOBI DESERT

WHEN I crossed in the saddle the great Gobi desert, which stretches all the way from Chinese to Russian territory, I performed a feat which very few Anglo-Saxons have ever attempted. I went by the route which one of the Khans laid down in the thirteenth century when China was invaded by hordes similar to the Goths and Huns who overran Europe. That track was like a dark-brown ribbon running through the yellow sands of the silent, mysterious desert; it was simply a track beaten hard by the bare feet of myriads of men and the padded hoofs of countless dromedaries. The Khan who made that trail held China for a long time; then with the greater part of his invading army he marched back the way he came to the terrible fastnesses of the Siberian wilds. He had erupted originally from the neighbourhood

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of Lake Baikal, and thither he returned loaded with loot of all sorts. He and his rough warriors took back as trophies of war innumerable Chinese girls with whom they mated, and the Asiatic strain is still strongly in evidence amongst the people who dwell by Lake Baikal, a fact which students of events in Russia would do well not to overlook. I for one do not consider it beyond the bounds of possibility that Siberia may yet become the home of a purely Asiatic race.

One little incident in connection with this invasion is worthy of note as showing the nature of the Chinese people. The Khan demanded an enormous tribute from China, and when he marched home he left behind him nearly a million men under one of his most formidable generals to collect the annual tribute. The general quartered his troops in the homes of the unfortunate Chinese, a man being billeted on a family, and the soldiers made free of all things under the roofs where they were quartered, which accounts for the Mongol and Tartar strain so often met with in China.

For two years this went on, then the Chinese revolted; news had come that the Khan's power in Siberia was on the wane. He was busy fighting

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a rival, a Tartar as strong as himself. The Chinese did not hold public meetings and talk of their intentions. Word was passed round that on a given day at dawn each household was to rise up and strangle the soldier billeted on the people, and at the hour appointed each household did arise and slay. Very few of the Khan's men had breakfast that morning, and China was free of the invader ; it is estimated by competent authorities, that fully three millions of people, including the women, were in the secret of that plot of wholesale destruction, yet not a word, look, or hint was given by this most mysterious people. No Western nation could have done a similar thing ; the Chinese smiled right up to the fateful moment, and then struck. As they were then, so they are now, the most secret, the most mysterious folk on this planet. Very wise, very foolish, weak as water, yet strong as triple steel, they are the enigma of the ages, they are the most tolerant and the most intolerant of peoples, the broadest minded and the most benighted, the bravest and most cowardly. They would crush out of existence any nation that permitted them to live in their midst and compete with them for a livelihood, for grinding poverty and over-

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competition amongst themselves have made them content with a scale of living that defies competition ; they ask for few pleasures outside the domestic circle. Their capacity for work is beyond belief ; they are slaves to toil, and enslave all who compete with them when they muster in numbers. They stand, the saddest product of the universe, four hundred odd million people, content by the grinding pressure of the ages to live, work, spawn their kind, and die without protest ; if they can snatch from the hands of destiny enough food to keep body and soul together, they are content. They are happy when a terrible plague sweeps away millions of their compatriots, because it reduces competition ; their very existence is a standing challenge to the belief in a personel God of love. The past has held nothing for them, the future holds out no hope ; the present is as the past was, and the future will be. Their national existence seems as objectless as the existence of the locusts swarms that come into being, eat the land bare, deposit their spawn and die ; they have achieved nothing, yet they are the oldest of all known peoples.

I learnt much from the Chinese ; they killed in me the last germ of socialism and communism,

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those doctrines of the dead. I saw much in them to admire: the splendid truthfulness and unimpeachable honour of their merchants; the reverence the highest and lowest paid to mothers and fathers; the chastity of their women; but I did not admire them as a nation, for I do not believe that God—if there is a God who discriminates between us and the moles in the sun—ever intended man to work all his days from dawn till dark for the mere right to live; rather than subscribe to that doctrine, I would prefer to be a monkey clinging by my tail from a bough in a Brazilian forest cracking nuts in the sunshine. Yet no one can call me a lazy man. I have worked and worked hard with hand or brain for every crust I have eaten since I was a boy of thirteen. Some day a statesmanlike way will be found to adjust the difficulties between China and the Anzac lands, for each can be of enormous benefit to the other; but until that way is found the Anzacs must protect themselves with the present crude poll tax, for they cannot risk an inundation of cheap labour; but the differences are not insoluble. When I left China my line of march took me across the Gobi desert, a spot that in summer is blistering hot; the sands and rocks



Starting to cross the Gobi Desert.

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are swept by winds that scorch and kill herbage and animals. In winter it is cold to deadliness ; fierce winds traverse its length and breadth, snow falls heavily and wolves prey upon the mobs of ponies and flocks of the nomads who range the great plains, living in rude tents as Ishmael of old lived. All their travelling is done on horseback or on dromedaries, and they rove from one oasis to another seeking food for their animals. The competition for the grass is keen, and fights amongst clans and families are not uncommon. They are just savages, bigoted, treacherous and untruthful. I would as soon take the word of a politician on the hustings as the word of a nomadic Mongol.

My outfit consisted merely of a dromedary, a couple of desert ponies, a Winchester rifle and a Colt revolver. The man who accompanied me was a wonderful rifle shot when it was his day out. I am a good shot or a very bad one according to my moods. One day I will shoot pretty well, the next I could not hit St. Paul's, if you led me up to it and tied me to the door knob ; but I have noticed that when I have had to fire at a man it has generally been on one of my good days. Our third day on the track across the desert we got a reputation that

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proved of value. The man who was with me sighted a large eagle settled on a lamb, some six hundred yards away. He lay down on the sand, twisted himself into all kinds of attitudes like a he-goat suffering from sunstroke; his *feet* towards the eagle. The Mongols standing by applauded; they thought he was going to tie himself into a knot and then offer a prize to the man who could undo him. I put it all down to swank, and offered to bet him six to four he did not hit in six shots, but he dropped the great bird as dead as a pebble first try. That gave us a great reputation.

I was the hunter of the party, and constantly roamed far off the trail on one of my ponies in search of game. I used to drop quite unexpectedly on to little oases in which deer were feeding, and got some sport. My Chinese boy accompanied me; he was a lunatic for sport; but I never saw a Chinaman who could hit a hill at a hundred yards, unless he aimed at a valley, then he was sure to hit the hill. One evening Ah Gou pointed to something moving on the sky-line, and implored me to shoot it. I could not make out what it was, and said to Ah Gou:

‘I don’t like to shoot; it may be a man.’

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‘No matter,’ said the pagan philosophically ; ‘you shoot straight ; if it game, we eat him ; if it a man, I bury him,—no will tell.’

I made sure it was not a man, and with a lucky shot dropped it. We cantered up to our quarry and found it was a goat that had been standing on its hind legs browsing off some bushes on the top of a low rock. The goat belonged to some nomads camped in a hollow a little way beyond, and they swarmed round, demanding payment, swearing it was a goat of marvellous breed and the best milker in the desert. On examination the animal proved to be a billy-goat, and when Ah Gou pointed out this inaccuracy and claimed that therefore it couldn’t have been a good milker, they were unabashed and said if this one was not a good milker, its mother was and its daughters might be. Of course I had to pay.

On another occasion firing at very close range at a buck, my bullet, being steel tipped, went clean through the animal, travelled across the trail about four hundred yards and slightly wounded a mangy old camel that would have been dead years before if it had had any sense of decency. It belonged to a crowd of

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Buriats we were travelling with for safety. The owner made a great clamour and stood nearly all night by my camp fire reciting the virtues of that hump-backed ancient, which he had offered to sell to me for a song, earlier in the trip. When I refused to be blackmailed, he heaped ashes on his head and gave me to understand I would have no luck in life until he washed. I did not like this, as from the look of him he hadn't washed since birth and he was old as the hills. He admitted the patent fact, but said it was a family heirloom, and heirlooms were precious; he wouldn't dare look his father in the face unless he took a solatium with him. Ah Gou advised me to let him fix the matter up, and he paid the blackmailer his own price and then won the money back from him at a gambling game something like 'hazards.' He returned me the money, only keeping a small percentage for himself. When I asked him how he did it, he grinned and said:

'It was welly easy; one time I run a Chinese gambling shop in Flixco, I learn ee muchee there.'

I was sure the Buriats suspected that Ah Gou had learnt something somewhere, for there was a decided coolness between them ever after. I think

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if he had travelled on the back trail towards China with them, he'd have had their whole outfit, but he was scared to be too free going towards their country. In the end, after he left my service in Russia, he fell in with those Buriats on his way back to Pekin, and they let a lot of his knowledge out of him, and his life at the same time. They were an ugly gang of cowardly cut-throats; we always took care to keep our camp separate from them. One night they tried to rush us just as we reached the Altai mountains, but we were waiting for them, and the reception they got was so inhospitable that they retired rapidly, at least some of them retired. When we looked for their camp in the dawn, they had disappeared and we shed no tears. These Buriats come from Siberia, and plenty of them are drafted yearly into the Russian Army; as soldiers they are not worth a dollar a thousand.

I suppose in all the world there is no stranger sight than the great trade trail that we were following. No European can enter it without a special pass from the Chinese Government on the Celestial Empire end, and the moment you set foot on the trail the Government washes its hands of

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you ; if you are robbed or murdered it is your own look out : the Government officials most certainly give a traveller plenty of warning concerning the danger of the track. It is the same at the Siberian end, where a Cossack patrol is always stationed. The officer of Cossacks tells you you are safe as long as you are within the range of the rifles ; after that, well, he shrugs his shoulders and says : ‘ Sir, you be with God.’

This trail has been the trade route between China and the hinterland of Russia since the dark ages, and it is estimated that over a million camels and ponies laden with merchandise pass the gateway of the great wall of China every year. Almost without exception the travellers are Asiatics. Once in a blue moon a Russian official strongly escorted hurries across on the business of the Tzar ; no one else goes, no one wants to. Crazy Asiatic pilgrims smitten with some sort of religious mania often make the journey. I saw hundreds of them, and I guess most of them were devil worshippers. The strangest sight I ever looked upon met my eyes four days after we had left Chinese territory. I saw a man, a pilgrim, stand bolt upright on the track, then he put his hands and head on the

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ground and over he went, landing on his feet and then over again ; I have done the same thing myself many a time when a boy, but I had never tried it as a means of locomotion. I went over to him with Ah Gou and we asked him where he was bound for in that topsy-turvy manner ; and he told us his destination was a shrine three hundred miles further along the track. I cannot say for sure, but I'm betting he never hit that shrine.

‘Welly holy man, that a fellah,’ said Ah Gou unctuously ; ‘if he gettee to shrine that a way, he have power to cast out devils.’

‘What special brand of devil is he having to whip by walking on his head ?’ I asked.

‘Lunatic devil, allee same Melican man call a bug house, he castee him out damn quick if he gettee to shrine walkee alee way topsides,’ remarked Ah Gou. I watched the religious lunatic catherine-wheeling along the dusty trail from the back of my dromedary until we lost him in the distance, and I could not help thinking there ought to be a first-class scrap on view if he ever met a greater lunatic than himself. Since I crossed the Gobi, a number of world-renowned motorists driving the most powerful cars science has produced crossed by

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the same route, and the world did them homage for the feat; columns were devoted to their progress in the greatest daily papers in the earth and much was made of their exploit. I took ten times as long to cross that desert, but they had motor-cars and all the luxury and protection in life; I had a dromedary, a couple of ponies, a Winchester, a revolver, and a love of adventure, and I think I had the best of the deal, though no paper made a hymn about it.

At Urga, the wooden-walled capital of Mongolia, situated midway between Russian and Chinese territory, I had an experience that was worth all the trouble of the passage, for there I saw raw gold. No man who has not been a gold-seeker can quite understand the thrill of the raw metal. Urga stands on the side of a river; all around it lie dreary, forbidding wastes of sand and rock; it is walled in on all sides by rude poles which are merely fir trees stripped of their branches. The walls are twenty feet high; they told me there that this palisade was erected to keep the packs of wolves at bay in winter. When the wolf packs are starved they go mad and charge through any unprotected town, and destroy and devour all

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living things—dogs, cattle, horses or men—nothing will stop them when they are famine mad. On the opposite side of the river are low mountain ranges where gold abounds. The priests, who know the value of gold, call these the holy mountains ; gold is always holy in the eyes of a priest, it always has been and always will be. Heaven is described as a place where the streets are paved with gold ; my own idea is that hell is the spot paved with the yellow metal that has driven men mad since the beginning of time. My idea of heaven is a place paved with flowers and roofed with sunshine ; perhaps that's because I have been a gold-seeker half my life and know what men do to win the metal.

I made inquiries of the priests concerning those mountains. At first they said they were holy, and only fit for very good men to tread ; then, when I said I wanted to be holy too, they told me that devils walked those hills and warned me to keep away, but who ever knew a prospector to be scared by devils ? So I went, and soon found that devils walked there all right, but they wore trousers. I offered to sell my modern knowledge and skill to open up those reefs, but they would have none of me. I

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was hunted out like a mad wolf, and I shall dream of the hills of Urga till I die, and gnash my teeth as I dream, for there is gold stored there, waiting for the batteries and the cyanide vats, sufficient to pay-off the debts of a nation, and those accursed priests hold it all in the hollow of their hands, as they have held it since the world was young ; yet they do not work the reefs and the conglomerate formations, they let the rains wash over the hills and carry the metal into the river, where the coolies dredge it out in a fashion so primitive that it made me sweat and swear to see them. Yet they won gold as I have never seen it won in all my wanderings. I do not speak as a novice ; I have been on all the known fields of the world in my time, excepting Klondyke, and a quartz nugget filled with gold that takes a two-handed man to lift is no new sight to me. I saw Mongols hand over to their priests, in their besotted ignorance, coarse gold and fine gold, pennyweight pieces and forty-ounce nuggets, until my eyes saw yellow and then saw red, and the priests treated the gold miners like dogs, spurning them with their boots and bidding them get more. I would give my soul to ride into Urga some day at the head of five hundred

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armed Australian diggers, and chance my luck. The world does not know it, but the great Mongol desert is the secret treasure-house of the old East ! I believe it was there that Solomon sent his emissaries to get the gold with which to build his temple—the fine gold, the beaten gold, the gold in lumps.

I spoke to a great Russian official about it in Petrograd on my way through, hoping to get him to back me. He smiled in my face.

‘This is a new thing to you,’ said he, ‘but we Muscovites have known it since the days of Peter the Great, and we dare not touch it because Mongolia is a buffer between us and China ; if we remove the buffer, we may be flooded out by the Chinese millions. All the world laughs at China, but we know the danger, just as the Dutchmen knew the danger of the Zuyder Zee. The Hollanders built dykes to keep back the waters, and let no man meddle with them ; we let no man meddle with Mongolia for fear of the human waves that may overrun us. Oh, yes, we know danger when we see it. All the rest of the world may laugh at China, but we do not ; we watch her.’

That ended my dream of getting Russian backing to have a shot at those gold mines ; I knew I could

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get no other, and so I have only my dream of what might have been, and at times those dreams make me ill. I do not think I should care so much if the yellow metal went to the poor devils of Chinamen who work so hard to win it. But to see a gang of lazy, lustful, arrogant Churchmen getting the greater part without effort hurts my sense of justice; but east or west are the big churches not very much the same; they all worship the God 'Grab.'

CHAPTER X

LIFE AS A SILVER MINER

BIRDS have an instinct for returning at intervals to their homes ; so have salmon. I am neither fish nor feather, but every now and again an insatiable craving comes to me to revisit the land of my birth.

There is no sweeter little city in the world than Adelaide ; no finer people on the globe than its inhabitants ; no more perfect climate to be met with East or West. It is a white man's country, inhabited by white folk ; its men are the most kindly and brave, its women the daintiest and truest I have foregathered with—to me it is the hub of the universe.

Once, long ago, I had drifted back there, and found strange rumours afloat concerning the discovery of silver at a place called Thackaringa. It was not in South Australian territory, it lay just over the New South Wales border, but geographically it belonged to the South, and the only way

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to reach it was by passing through Adelaide. Silver had never before been found in payable quantities in Australia, the wonderful Broken Hill silver mines—the greatest in the history of the world—being then unheard of.

I had the noble sum of fifteen shillings in the world, and as good a pair of legs as any lad living, and determined to chance my luck and tramp to the new Eldorado. It was nothing to make a poem about ; Australian youngsters did that sort of thing every day. The last eighty or hundred miles in South Australian territory was as flat as a man's hand and as waterless as a dry eye. There was no grass—the plains were covered with salt bush—a slate-grey shrub with tiny sprouts in place of leaves. Sheep flourish on salt bush, and camels eat it when they can get nothing else, but cattle and horses loathe it. Beyond the plains lay the God-forsaken Barrier Ranges, and in those ranges lay Thackaringa.

No need to go into details concerning the years I spent there, learning my job as a silver prospector. It was a hard life, full of disappointments. When I had no money I worked on the small mines ; then I got into an assay office and picked

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up assaying. This was easy, as in order to learn I was always willing to work late and do another man's job for him; but I hated working for a boss, no matter how good an employer he might be. I always wanted to be my own man, and most of my life I have been, and shall be to the end.

As soon as I scraped a bit of money together, I formed a prospecting party, elected myself leader and went out into the wilds. Many prospectors made money out of their finds—I made little or none; for, without being a tin saint, I was honest. I never found a silver 'show' that I thought good enough to put on the market, though I found several that were much better than nine-tenths of those that were floated into pretty big companies. I think it was more a matter of pride than of conscience; I was proud of my name—proud as the very devil of my father's reputation. Men who had known him for a lifetime used to say that the gold was not minted that could make him stand sponsor for a crooked claim; and though we had parted in anger, and I was the black sheep and fool of the family, I gloried in his splendid reputation, and took an oath to myself that if

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ever shame came to his name, it should not be through me. I've broken a lot of vows since then, but I never broke that one. I can look him in the face when we meet in the shadows.

I did all kinds of jobs on the fields when I had no money to go prospecting. Once I was a blacksmith's striker; I drove a grocer's cart; was a carpenter's labourer. I had a good employer at this game. It was in a mining camp called Silverton; his name was Arthur Pincombe, and he set me to hanging doors on his tin shanties. One day he paid me off, saying:

'By Gad, old man, you're the most willing worker I ever saw, but you have no more idea of mechanics than a peacock has of pushing a barrow. You mean well and you try hard, but you have no sense; if I left you to yourself you'd have the door on the roof of the next place you built.'

I knew he was right and I loved him for his plain speaking, for he was honest. I had no mechanical sense. I could not hang a door on a fowl-house properly. He sacked me and I got a job with two brothers; they were new chums. They had never had a square meal in their own country and were getting rich quick in my country. They were

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always spouting about the wrongs of democracy, yet they made the hardest taskmasters I ever struck—a pair of ignorant bigots. I carried timber for them ten hours a day, and I worked like a battery mule. Man after man worked beside me and left the job because they bullied and cursed so much. I stuck to it because I was keeping a good mate out prospecting with the wages I earned; he prospected, I worked in the camp, and I paid for his tucker and tools. He was sixty years old and the best and gamest prospector I ever struck.

One day one of the brothers called me a name no man ever called me without hearing about it. It reflected on my mother, and more than insinuated she had not been married when I was born. I dropped my load and hit him on the chin; his brother came at me with an axe. I met his rush half-way with a section of a brick, for even in those days I knew the worth of artillery, properly applied; then the pair of them tried to do things to me, and I being at that time a salt-water baptist, started a war against Bigotry. The wooden part of the roof of the building was going up at the time, and they

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took to the roof ; I went after them with three feet of lead pipe in my fist. They got off the roof and ran to dear old Jim Penton, the police trooper. Jim and I were known to each other ; he was a white man. He heard their story and wrenched the lead pipe out of my hand and the axe and chisel from theirs ; pushed the three of us into an empty room, locked the door and went to the bar for refreshments. I had a very happy time in that room, but was never on speaking terms with either of the brutes afterwards. They paid me off next day by post, and a storekeeper, who was known to Jim Penton, the trooper, gave me a grub stake to go out and join my mate prospecting. He had staked out a claim next to the Appollyn silver mine, which was on the market for £100,000 cash. We worked our claim for three months ; there were three of us—old Bob Rees, ‘Scotty,’ a runaway sailor, and I. Our lode was exactly similar to the one in the £100,000 claim. It was solid ironstone, thirty feet wide, and was in fact a continuation of the lode in the big claim.

We put a vertical shaft down on that lode. It was hard at the crust, but every foot it got harder, until it was almost as tough as the steel drills we

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used. There was mighty little silver in it, in fact it was just about pure railroad iron ; we ought to have gone into partnership with a blacksmith and started making horseshoes, but everybody said it was the best show in the Day Dream Valley. Experts came and congratulated us, vaunting the rich silver we should strike at a depth ; it had been the same in the Appollyn, our peg and peg neighbours.

One Sunday a party of city speculators drove out from Silverton camp and offered us £11,000 cash for our show. The storekeeper and I were for taking it ; old Bob and Scotty, the sailor, said ' nay,' they would gamble all or nothing. The offer meant £3,000 each for us and £2,000 for the storekeeper who had grub-staked us. In the end, as we were equally divided in opinion, we tossed for it, and my side lost and we went on working. Then the rich streak in the Appollyn cut out and the claim was abandoned. We tried to sell ours for £500 and failed. Eventually we sold out for £50. The man who bought it mined it, not for silver but for flux, and sold the iron he raised to a water-jacket smelting furnace in Day Dream Valley, and made a pile. Our iron was just the

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right sort of stuff for flux, but the idea had not struck us.

Scotty, the sailor, went back to sea ; old Bob went far inland, seeking for gold ; I tramped into Silverton to look for a job.

They were just about to start the first newspaper on the Barrier Ranges. I saw some men mapping out the spot where the big wooden office was to stand in Argent Street ; they were marking the spots for the post holes, the building was to stand on blocks a foot from the ground.

I had a wash and a shave and applied to the proprietor for a job as editor. He snarled a refusal. Then I asked for a position as leader writer and was told to go to the devil. I didn't go ; I asked for the post of mining reporter and got my head bitten off. I persisted, and sought a job as general reporter, but had no luck. Thrusting my hand inside my shirt, I produced two poems and asked that they might find a place in the poets' corner. The man looked at them and said my poetry was damn trash, and he added, ' Anyway, there ain't going to be any poets' corner on this paper ; the only corner for poets is in the cemetery.'

I felt slightly discouraged after all these rebuffs

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and was turning away when I noticed that there was only one man to dig all the post holes, so said :

‘ I want to get on the staff of this paper somehow ; give me a job sinking holes.’

He sneered and said if I couldn’t sink holes better than I could write poetry I wasn’t worth my room, but I went out and got the job from the contractor and sunk holes and helped to lay the foundations of that paper. I wrought mightily at the hole-sinking job, for I saw the cynical beast, who had turned me out of his presence, watching me, and I did three men’s work, hoping to impress him.

When the job was finished I was paid off, and again applied for a place on the journalistic staff.

‘ No,’ said the cynic, ‘ you sink post holes too damn well to be any good as a journalist. A journalist, young man, is a person who is no good to God or man, except to spill ink on paper, and most of them are no good at that. You stick to pick and shovel and leave the pen alone, and perhaps in the end God may have mercy on you for your misdeeds.’ A nice reward for having done three men’s work for one man’s pay, eh ?

I kept the poems he had jibed at and showed

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them to big Jim Wilkinson, the learned mail driver, and Jim said :

‘ Cheer up, boy, you’ll be using a pen when that fool is using a pick.’

Shortly afterwards there was a competition in Adelaide, open to Australia, for poetry. Each poet had to send his stuff in anonymously. Jim Wilkinson sent in one of my discarded poems, and it won Australia’s first prize. A couple of years later I again won Australia’s prize poem and was very proud, and started to let my hair grow long, until I got into a mix-up with five Chinamen at Port Adelaide, when down from the silver fields for a vacation. They were grass pullers by profession, and when they had done with me I went right away to a barber’s and had what was left of my hair cut so close that you couldn’t tell whether I was born bald or burnt bare. I joined the noble order of short-haired poets from that day on and have kept to it ever since. Still I was mighty proud of winning Australia’s prize poem twice. I would rather win a pair of pullets for a square meal now, but the glamour of fame was on me then. I’m a bread-and-butter artist now, and would not give ten cents a mile for the finest review of my work ever written.

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Shortly afterwards I led a prospecting party and found a fine limestone lode, which we sold for flux to a water-jacket smelter. You see iron, wood, and limestone have to be used to smelt silver ore, and this panned out real good for us. With my share out of the proceeds I bought an interest in three race-horses—at least we called 'em race-horses, what the public called them need not be mentioned here. We were all dead honest, we raced to win and we dropped our money ; yet the public, or a section of it, called us a ' cunning crowd,' and said we raced to rig the market, though three greater ' tenderfeet ' than we were never raced horses ; and as for rigging the market, we did not know enough to rig a windsail over a hatchway. We were just green-horns, that's all, and we dropped our cash.

Then I got a job driving a mail coach ; it lasted one consecutive day. There were six horses in the team, four of which had never smelt harness. When I took hold of the ribbons four or five men were fighting to ride on the box beside me ; before we had been going a mile those who had been happy enough to get on the box seat were howling to get down, they said they wanted to walk the rest of the way. My leaders were good cattle, but

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during that first mile they became inquisitive ; they wanted to see what was inside the coach. Instead of dashing along in the lead, as they did when Big Jim Wilkinson or Jimmy Nicholas was driving, they persisted in turning round and looking reproachfully at me. When I put the whip on them, one leader wanted to go north, the other south, and the coach had a bad time ; where it was not butting trees, it was dashing over boulders. In the end one wheeler was sitting on the pole, the other was tangled up in the harness, doing his level best to kick me off the box ; the two intermediate horses were kicking the wheelers, and the leaders had screwed themselves round and were trying to get behind the coach ; the passengers, male and female, were hiding in the scrub,—they said they would not get on that coach again for a kingdom. At the finish, we managed to cut the horses out of the tangled harness ; a black boy rode on with the mails on a bare-backed leader ; the passengers trudged the trail to the first change station, the mail coach remained where we left it and I went in search of another job. I did not even apply for my one day's pay—I had an idea I might not get it.

My next venture as a leader of prospectors was

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attended with a bit of luck. We found a small claim which we worked until it cut out, and made a bit out of it. Then Charley Rasp, a German boundary rider, working for a pound a week and tucker, pegged out Broken Hill, a line of claims that was destined to lower the price of silver by its output by about one-half; nothing the world has ever known has equalled it, nor ever will. It is employing its thousands of miners to this day and turned out a gigantic quantity of the spelter used in the present war, as well as lead and silver, yet that mine was pegged by a man who knew no more about mining than a cockney coster knows about astrology. He found a great barren-looking ironstone hill, some two miles long, cropping up in the middle of a plain where the sheep he had to round up used to graze. In a moment of inspiration he pegged it as a mine; a small syndicate was formed, fourteen men put in £20 apiece, or twenty men put in £14 each—I forget which—and the concern was put on the Adelaide market as a mine. At the outset it was hoped that it might supply flux to the smelters; there were no indications of silver on the surface; I know because I went over it. Then I got a bad dose of typhoid fever through

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drinking contaminated water out of a native well ; and when I got up, there was a township of tents in the Broken Hill district. I got a living, writing letters for miners during my convalescence ; and one night, sitting by my camp fire with Jim Rowatt, a lawyer's clerk from Adelaide, who had turned prospector, a man came to us and offered to sell us half of one share in the Broken Hill mine for £50. We tried to raise the cash and failed ; an auctioneer bought it and made a quarter of a million pounds out of it, for a shaft had been sunk on the crest of the hill, which I think they called Jamieson's shaft ; it broke through the iron crust of the hill and entered into a lode composed largely of chloride of silver. The Broken Hill claim was broken up into half a dozen mines, all of which have turned out millions of pounds worth of silver. One full share in this vast property—the very richest the world has ever known—was given to the proprietor of the local newspaper. He sold a lot of his interests in the early stages of development, but kept enough to make him so rich that he became the most miserable man I ever met. He dropped journalism pretty quick, but the paper became a great power, so great that it became autocratic

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and the miners determined to crush it. I am happy to say I was the man who showed them how to do it ; we broke it and wound it up in the days when Broken Hill had grown to be almost a city and so got my own back from the man who had sneered at me when I asked him for work as a journalist.

The paper that started to rival the original journal was called *The Broken Hill Times*, and I was its mining reporter. I had graduated for the job as miner, prospector, assayer and boss of small mines, and I knew the country top and bottom. That paper was not a success, though it struggled on for a good while ; it was run on autocratic lines, and sided in all things against the miners and poorer classes of prospectors,—in a word, it was a capitalist's organ run in the sole interests of capital and was foredoomed to failure. My work was simply to report upon mines, and I stuck to it.

A new paper was started. I was offered and accepted the position of mining reporter on the staff, and for about three years filled that position. The paper was a success from the first issue ; it was run on democratic lines, and advertised that one of its main features would

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be fearless outspoken mining reporting. The most tremendous mining boom the southern hemisphere has ever known was just commencing. Claims were being floated every day and almost every hour in all the Australian cities, but Adelaide was the boom centre.

I have seen cattle, horse and sheep go mad in their thousands in drought time, when the water ran out and the sun beat down mercilessly day by day, and I saw the Australian nation go mad with the money thirst ; the whole country went plumb crazy, and remained loco for years. The gigantic fortunes made by the lucky prospectors and investors got on the young nation's nerves, and the people were an easy prey for the knaves who floated bogus claims and wrongfully manipulated the silver output from the mines to send the prices of shares up or down. Merchants, mechanics, day labourers, all kinds and conditions of men, plunged into the insane gamble ; the poor pawned their household furniture, the middle-class their shops, the wealthy their businesses, and very often their honour ; many made piles of money, many more were ruined, some committed suicide, some went to gaol ; it was a carnival of greed, and the after-math

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was sweat and tears. The men who worked most of the swindles were from over the seas ; they were cute, clever people, wise in the knowledge that stock exchanges bring. They came from London, Berlin, Paris, New York and every big centre, and they found the Australians 'easy.' Later on some of the Antipodeans turned the lessons they learned from the invaders to account, and worked off swindles on the London and foreign public—the sheep became the shearers.

Into this vortex of corruption I was pitched headlong by my paper ; my orders, given by the editor, dear old Jack Cardon, once of the *London Times*, were to 'slay and spare not.' I have been a lover of peace and quietness all my days, yet fate has eternally thrown me where the whirlwind blows, and there were whirlwinds enough in all conscience in Broken Hill those days. There were no half-measures about dear old Jack Cardon ; he was as brave as a bulldog, and as incorruptible as St. Michael ; he loved his profession and was proud of it, and he could write as few men could. Terse, crisp, clever, his articles went right to root matters, and his scorn for those who kept not their hands clean was withering. He taught me my job ; to

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him, more than to any man living or dead, I owe what measure of success I have won with my pen. He was a tutor to be proud of. We became friends at once, though he was grey in knowledge and I was green with the greenness of youth. I remember the first article I took to him in his sanctum ; it dealt with the ethics of mining, the despoiling of the people by mining sharks,—and the money madness of the times ; it was headed : ‘ A NATION CRUCIFIED ON A CROSS OF SILVER.’ He read it and said :

‘ Good stuff, hot stuff, but outside your province, boy. Stick to reporting on the mines, that’s *your* job. Do your work thoroughly ; take no man’s word for anything ; see for yourself, take your own samples, assay them yourself, and then write the solid truth, and fear neither man, devil, nor the law of libel ; if you go to gaol you’ll get out again, and I’ll back you root and branch. If you scamp your work, I’ll fire you !’

Then the circus began in earnest. I had two good horses to ride, and I rode those fields far and near and inspected claims, rode home with my samples, assayed them, wrote my reports—and put up with the consequences. One report that I

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recall was typical of dozens we published.

A mine (?) had been found a good way off from Broken Hill proper ; samples of ore, as rich as the richest found in the great mine, were brought in, and the prospectors swore those samples came from the ' Dainty Dinkie,' the new mine (?). The town went crazy when the specimens containing chloride of silver and native silver in *Kaolin* ore were exhibited. A mighty rush set in. The country was pegged for miles ; the ten-pound syndicate shares in the ' Dainty Dinkie ' leapt up to fabulous prices. I went to the office and asked for an order to inspect the mine ; instead of the order they presented me with several fully paid up syndicate shares. Then I got to saddle, rode out to the ' Dainty Dinkie ' and got down ; just how I managed that, need not be told here. The mine (?) was a fraud ; the samples I took home and assayed only yielded traces of silver and lead, whilst the samples the gang were booming the show on went many thousands of ounces to the ton. There was no ambiguity about my report ; the headlines ran :

THE ' DAINTY DINKIE ' A SHAMEFUL SWINDLE

The evil news fell like a thunderbolt on town and

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camp alike. An angry crowd surged round the office, vowing to do to me all manner of unspeakable things ; every man who owned a 'Dainty Dinkie' share yelled that I was a liar or worse ; each fellow who had pegged a claim in the hope of getting rich quick, wanted me tarred and feathered and run out of the town. I got the usual reward a man gets for telling fools the truth.

The miners tramping down from the big mine like an army saved the situation. They had brains, those fellows, and they said : ' If the rich ore was in the mine, it is there now ; we'll go and see ; if this young fellow has published lies, he'd better not be on hand when we come back.' And out to the mine (?) they tramped, and the town went with them ; I rode with the vanguard on a big bay steeple-chase horse of my own, and the prospectors bluffed right up to the last. A dozen miners, well known for their experience and honesty, were selected by the mob to make the examination, and when they came to the surface the leader said tersely : ' Boys, she be a damn swindle ! ' and that was just what ' she ' was. I waited for the cheer that I thought would have heralded my victory ; I was too young to know

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that mankind hates the truth, *that* knowledge comes with experience. I got black looks and hard words as I swung homewards in my saddle, though I had saved a community from being robbed and duped. I made lots of money reporting privately on claims for intending speculators and I earned every penny of it, for I saved many a man's banking account from being depleted. I do not think I was ever popular with the people of Broken Hill; I know I was not with the tricky class of mine managers; as for the 'brokers' in the big cities, they would have gladly subscribed for my hanging.

On another occasion a prospector brought in from far-away back country some phenomenal gold specimens. He called his claim 'The Magic,' and he floated it on the Orange Lodge, and everybody was sworn to secrecy. Of course somebody told a pal, and the pal told his wife, and the town seethed with the news. The shares went to the skies in price, and the prospector, who was a superb bushman, got away in the saddle and easily fooled all who tried to follow him. He re-appeared after the lapse of weeks with more specimens, and again the 'Magic' shares boomed; once more

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he fooled all followers, and I was sent out to hunt his track. That trip cost me the best horse I ever rode, and I have ridden some wonderful cattle, for I knocked my steeple-chaser's off foreleg up, jumping a bush fence in the dusk ; he would not have hurt his leg if my nerve had been as good as his ; it was bad riding, not bad jumping that did the mischief. After about a week of searching I picked up my man's trail and followed it to the ' Magic ' mine (?). There was not gold enough in the show to weight a butterfly ; it was the most impudent fraud on record ; no lode of any sort, no reef, nothing but a shaft sunk in yellow clay, the ' specimens ' had come from some other district. The mine (?) was in a lonely bit of bad bush country, and I was alone with four pretty desperate men who knew I was going to expose them ; but I bluffed and talked of a posse of miners whom I had left close behind, and they let me go ; had they only known that I hadn't a soul within sixty miles, they might not have been so reasonable. Getting to a telegraph station I wired the news to my journal, and ' Magic ' shares were as valueless as waste paper. Mighty small thanks did I get for that bit of work, yet it was good work ; but

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the black looks of the folks made me bitter, it was passing strange how the public loved to be fooled and gulled. Making exposures of that kind was in a sense every-day work, there were so many arrant swindlers knocking round, men of broken fortunes who desperately tried to re-establish themselves; these men would peg out any old piece of ground, call it a mine, and pay some unscrupulous mining expert a big fee to write a glowing report for a prospectus, and on the market the rubbish would go. I knocked dozens of these things cold, and came pretty near being knocked cold myself more than once; but luck stood by me.

In one big mine a very pretty game was worked. The silver lode was of great value in this claim, but it had a habit of 'pinching' and filling. I mean by this that in places the precious ore would be twelve or fifteen feet wide, then hard country would intervene and the lode would pinch. This made the shares very jumpy in price; they would fluctuate pounds in a few days. The crowd who were manipulating this mine were not content with those fluctuations; they put up a job on the public, and spread the report that the lode had cut out at the 300 ft. level; a panic set in, the shares

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fell to zero. I forget now just what the shares were selling at, when this report was spread, but think it was about seven pounds per share ; they dropped in value until they were selling at a few shillings. No reporter got at the truth ; I was politely but firmly refused permission to go below. Weeks passed and still the same pessimistic reports were given out officially to the Press ; then I got my orders from the office : ‘ Get down that mine somehow and see how things are at the 300 ft. level.’ I made many attempts, but failed, for the mouth of the working shaft was carefully guarded, and the miners inspected before they went below. I knew the mine most intimately and was aware that at midnight each Saturday all hands knocked off, as there was no Sunday shift.

I clambered down an old abandoned prospecting shaft and nearly broke my neck in a fall from a rotten ladder ; then creeping in darkness along the 100 ft. level drive, I got to the main shaft and went below to the 300 ft. level and found a splendid lode of silver ore in existence,—the lode the share manipulator said had cut out. It was a risky job. Once when creeping along a drive in the dark, I felt one foot go into space, and drew back feeling

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pretty sick. Striking a match and lighting a candle, I looked down and saw a winze at my feet—a winze may best be described to the non-mining public as a well—it led from the 100 ft. to the 200 ft. level if I remember rightly. Now a drop of a hundred feet in the dark with solid rock to land on would in all probability have stopped my growth.

There was an awful row on the Monday when my report appeared. Shares leapt up to their old price, the great daily papers in the cities published my report and a great scream was made, but nothing was done. I did not make a centavo, nor did I get even the price of the clothes I had spoiled; yet if I had kept my pen still I could have netted £10,000 without trouble, and I knew it. The folk who were working that mine changed their tactics after my exposure, and the air was full of rumours that the lode was of fabulous richness; shares began to rise over their proper value, just as they had previously sunk below their real worth. Again I got the order: 'Get down and give us the truth.' I went up and asked permission, but was hounded off the mine like a mad dog. Then I tried to break into the mine at

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night, and the night watchman laid me out with a pick handle. I kept that episode to myself, for it was no use advertising failures. Another night I ran into several watchmen and I got all that was coming to me and a bit that ought to have gone to some one else ; that event I also kept inside myself. I did not want the crowd at the mine to have the laugh of me ; they knew they had given some one a sinful time, but they did not know it was me—but I did. The only man I told was my grim old father, and he said: ‘ Keep your mouth shut and stick to your job, don’t let them beat you ; you owe it to the public, do your duty.’

After the second rude handling I decided to depend upon strategy. I got a circus proprietor, a Maori named Jack Ice, to dye me black with a preparation he knew of. I think it was nitrate of silver and logwood ; he shaved off my little golden moustache first, then curled my hair with curling tongs till it looked like nigger wool ; pasted the gums of my teeth with wadding to make my mouth like a gash in a water melon, built my shoulders up with cotton-wool and lint bandages, until I had no neck to speak of, and gave me a chest that measured fifty-two, under the

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armpits. Then he arrayed me in a suit of his that was so loud it could almost talk and sprinkled me with imitation jewellery. The rôle I had to play was that of a nigger prize-fighter just arrived on the fields from San Francisco. When I saw myself in the glass the picture frightened me.

Drifting down to the Kiosk Hotel, the great sporting house on the fields, I promptly insulted Owen Sullivan, the champion professional pugilist of the Barrier, and challenged him to fight. I was never so scared in my life. If he had said 'Yes,' I had made up my mind to have a little fit on the spot, for Owen could have whipped me in a punch, and his punch would probably have meant a broken jaw. I made trouble with him because he knew me better than any man on the fields did ; and I felt sure if he did not recognize me, no one else would. I cannot put into print what the big Irish fighter said to me, but he had not a ghost of a suspicion who I was. I had a big packet of gospel tracts in my coat pocket, around which I had rolled a couple of five-pound notes : this was my 'wad' of money with which to help to bluff good old Owen. I pulled it out and threw it on the bar, and called it £3,000, but it

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was five hundred gospel tracts and two banknotes. A couple of sporting men eyed that 'wad' covetously ; they were card players and I had counted on using one or both of them. They rose to the bait like trout to a fly, and we were soon on good terms ; they suggested a little game of poker, at which simple game I would have fared about as well at their hands as I would have fared with Owen Sullivan in a fight. Of course I said I was dying to play poker, but first I wanted to look over a silver mine and meet some of the sporting mine managers. They were a great boxing crowd on the particular mine I wanted to see, and I knew the two card players could get me an introduction in my guise as nigger prize-fighter. They drove me to the mine, introduced me to the manager as the black Champion of America, told him how I had just publicly called Owen Sullivan down, and he took me to his heart. All over his mine he led me like a pet lamb ; he explained the 100 ft. level, the 200 ft. level, and the nature of the lodes to me and he let me take samples where I would ; then he took me to the famous deep level, and right under his unsuspecting eyes I gathered samples to take away for assay purposes, and then we went up and I

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invited him to come and win a pile by backing me when I fought my first prize-fight. A few hours later when the paper came out with a full account of my adventure he came driving furiously to the office, declaring it was all a lie ! He said he would know Hales if he saw him in the dark, so I went with my black face, and spoke to him, and it took me a few minutes to convince him that I was really myself ; and then I had the laugh of them and my reports put the shares of that mine on a proper basis. A great crowd came round the office, and this time I was cheered for my work.

The black dye did not come off for weeks, and some of the stuff getting in my eyes, did me injury which lasted for years. For that job I gathered considerable fame, but not a centavo of money beyond my regular salary. I beat the most acute crowd in the whole of Australia, that was my only reward, but it gave me the training that was afterwards to make me a successful war correspondent. Some of the mining reporters who had not a fiftieth part of my knowledge, or a tithe of my opportunities, left the fields rich men ; they did not bolster up crooked work, but they remained discreetly silent at the critical moments. On one

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occasion when Block 10 of the famous Broken Hill reef struck silver for the first time, and struck it so rich that the actual facts beggared belief, I was the only journalist who knew it. A miner knocking off work on the midnight shift on New Year's eve brought me some ore to assay. I got out of bed and made the assay and had a fortune at my fingers' ends. All I had to do was to say nothing at the office, but I had pledged myself to report instantly all things of importance. I got down the mine on New Year's morning, confirmed the find, wrote my report, and shares jumped from one pound ten to twenty-one pounds. I never made a dollar—why? because I loved my profession and was proud of it. All these things are matters of history in Australia. I never made a five-pound note out of a share deal or by mine flotation during the whole term of my office on that paper, which was then the most powerful journal in the country as far as silver mining was concerned. I did make a good deal of money reporting privately, and ninety-seven per cent. of my reports were condemnatory. I advised people not to speculate in claims I knew to be rotten and got paid for my advice. I left the field as poor

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as I went on to it after having had a hundred chances to make a fortune. The money I made I lost, backing genuine prospectors and working claims that turned out no good and were never offered to the public. There is many a very rich man whom I would not shake hands with, simply because by means of bogus flotations they filched from the pockets of the poor, and robbed the widow and the orphan. Yet in those days I loved a prize-fight, a horse-race, a glass of good wine, the rattle of a dice box, a mild cigar, and the sight of a pair of twinkling feet in a ball-room could always set my pulses beating ; I loved money too, but I wanted mine clean. I made a host of enemies who have smitten me hip and thigh since then ; I don't think I made three friends who would subscribe a penny apiece to bury me—*Vae Victis !* I learnt then and I know now that Demos knows not gratitude.

It was a splendid life for a youth that I led as a mining reporter. I often had to cover twenty miles of lonely bush country to get out to a prospector's claim—sometimes double or treble that distance—and it meant loneliness, and camping where the night found me. I invariably had a

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couple of good kangaroo hounds with me, for then, as now, I was a dog lover, and would sooner have a good dog's company than a man's. Many a rousing gallop had I after kangaroos or emus, for game was plentiful and my horses always good. But I had one other joy—reading. Always I carried in my saddle bag a book by some great author; dear old Jack Cardon had drawn me up a list of books worth reading, and his list covered almost every phase of thought, and in that way I educated myself. I read everything I could purchase or borrow, from Shakespeare and Milton's works to Tom Payne and Robert Ingersoll, from Carlyle to Bobbie Burns, and though I could never make much of the latter's poetry, not being a Scot, I think I did absorb some of the noble lessons of this, the greatest of all humanitarians who ever loosed his soul in verse. Poetry appealed to me, as to nearly all Australians, and at that time I wallowed in the works of Adam Lindsay Gordon, Byron, Keats, Shelley, Ayton, Scott, Montgomery, Browning, Bret Harte, Edgar Allen Poe, and many another word painter, and would love to live over again, were it possible, those nights out under the stars with my horse crunching his oats close by,

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my hounds, jowl on paws, crouching by my camp fire, dreaming, as dogs do, of the day's hunting. Oh, those never-to-be-forgotten nights, as I lay on my blankets, pipe in mouth, book in hand, and o'erarching all, the everlasting wonder and mystery and magic of the eternal stars ! Was it not Oliver Wendell Holmes who wrote 'The man would be a boy again' ? My memory for names is not good, but the spell of that beautiful little poem is strong upon me to-night as I write, and I would I could be that youthful mining reporter once again, with hounds and horse and lonely camp fire, and all my beautiful visions and high ideals. God, how far away they seem ! How great and noble the dreams of boyhood, how feeble the realizations of ripe manhood ! How much we *dream*, how little we do !

In that fashion I got my education, the only education I ever had. It was not all poetry by a long, long way. Books dealing with the struggles of humanity in the battle for bread I read and tried to master : Henry George, John Stuart Mill, Cobden, and a host of others, and also standard works on irrigation, mining, the silk industry, steel manufacture, cotton growing, tobacco cultivating,

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big root industries around which revolve the lives and happiness of millions of all colours and kinds. When anything impressed me very much, I used to say to my own soul : ‘ I’ll go and see that some day, and try and get first-hand understanding,’ for young as I was, I knew that no man really gets near the soul of a thing by simply reading about it, or by being taught in schools, or attending lectures. Hundreds of the promises I made to myself by those camp fires, I have since kept, though to do so I have had to wander half over the globe : the irrigation triumphs of Egypt ; the cotton fields of America ; the silk industries of China and Italy ; the great meat-preserving works of South America ; the coal mines of Wales and England ; the vast factories of Britain and Germany ; the flower industry of Holland ; the salmon catching and canning of Canada ; the mining and lumber camps of North America ; the wizard growth of industries of all kinds in Japan ; the art galleries of France, Holland, Russia, Italy and England ; the prisons of Siberia ; the vineyards of Germany and France ; the lace industry of Belgium and Ireland ; the growing of roses for the manufacture of scent in the Balkans ; the

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tobacco industry in Turkey, and much beside, but there is much yet to be seen, many a promise made to myself in boyhood unfulfilled. The reader ambling through these pages may ask, had I a motive in those far-away days for pledging myself to such a task, or was it just the seeds of the wanderlust? I will be quite frank. I had made up my boyish mind that some day, if I lived, I would play a part, and a big part, in nation building out there under the dear Southern Cross, and to do so properly I must equip myself with *first-hand knowledge*; mere reading would not do; I must go and see the world for myself and take back to mine own people the fruits plucked from the tree of knowledge. In this quest for knowledge I have spent most of the money I have earned. Perhaps in the end, fate will not permit me to put what I have gleaned to practical use for my dearly loved country's benefit. If that be so, I shall smile as I turn my face to the wall, for I believe in destiny. Whether I use my knowledge or not, this much remains—I have lived and not vegetated; I have done my best to gather the seeds; the sowing thereof lies in a mightier hand than mine—in the hand of destiny. If I succeed,

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it is well. If I fail, it also is well, because, according to my lights, I have done my best.

One side of my education I did not leave to chance reading. War and warriors fascinated me from my mother's dugs. From Cæsar to Frederick the Great, from the great German to Turenne and Napoleon, from Justinian to Belasarius, I studied them all. The wonderful conquerors of Asiatic origin also impressed me vastly; some of these latter kind were greater far in genius than all the Europeans except Cæsar, Frederick the Great and Napoleon, yet Europe has scarce any knowledge of their existence. In some cases I have visited their battlefields, and camped on their line of march, centuries after they and their followers had turned to dust. It was good for me to read of those makers of history, good also to take the trouble to explore their battlefields, though I have often wondered at the good thereof when some raw subaltern, who has just learned to wipe his nose without falling out of step, has asked me with a sneer: 'What do you know of war?' I wondered also when fifteen times my application for a post in the fighting line in the present war was refused. But, as I remarked before,

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I am a firm believer in destiny ; I did not learn war for nothing ; the man and the hour will yet meet.

Harking back to the days of my education by the camp fire, or to my reading as my horse ambled easily over the salt bush plains, I recall how Shelley's panegyric on the Euganean Hills haunted me ; I wondered if there could be a place so beautiful, or was it a poet's dream ? I'll go and see those hills some day, was a promise I made to my soul, and during the great war I stood with a Captain of the Coldstream Guards and gazed on the Euganean Hills, swimming in liquid moonlight, on such a night as Italy alone can produce of all the lands of earth, and I knew that, great master of beautiful phrases as Shelley was, he for once had failed to do justice to his theme ; those hills bathed in moonlight splendour were more lovely than a poet's fancy, they were worth going half round the world to see. As I gazed on the wonder in deep-toned blue, wrapt round by a silver haze, my ears were filled with the throb-throb-throbbing of nightingales' liquid notes, whilst ever and anon a deep-toned gun growled its thunderous note of war from the crest of distant Mont de Grappa. It was the reading of my youth realized with a vengeance in the autumn of my days.

CHAPTER XI

A STRIKING EPISODE

A GREAT strike was raging on Broken Hill. The oldest newspaper took the side of the capitalists. On that occasion the miners were absolutely in the right ; the paper preached the gospel the of boycott against the miners, and the paper was then a great force. It struck me that the only way to fight the journal was to go to war against it with its own weapon, the boycott. I drew up a scheme and laid it before the strike committee, and they adopted it and carried it out to the letter and broke the power of the journal for ever, and eventually closed its door.

The scheme in brief was this. All the boys who sold the paper were the sons of miners ; all those boys were called in, not one would sell a paper ; they were very loyal to their class, those little beggars.

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Secondly, a house-to-house canvass was made and every housewife was enjoined to destroy the journal without opening it, if it was left at the home. This the women did with unerring promptitude when the management hired men to deliver the paper at the dwellings, and the boys made the lives of the men who carried the news sheet anything but heavenly. Thirdly, a list was taken of every tradesman advertising in the obnoxious publication and the miners and their wives boycotted them all; pickets were placed outside each shop who simply said to an intending purchaser, 'Every shilling spent in this shop is a shilling given to our enemies.' Soon every one of those business places were empty of customers; they could not sell a thing until they withdrew their advertisements. Thus the circulation of the paper was stopped, its advertisements were crippled, and in time it dwindled away and died—the boycott had cut both ways. The strike went on and became as bitter as gall; blackleg labour was imported, the miners' funds ran out, the cupboards were empty, famine lorded it in every house, and victory was in the hands of the masters. Then I did a thing I would not lightly do again, but I was young and knew little of feminine human

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nature. I called a meeting of women ; they came in their thousands, old grey wives and young brides, mothers of families and growing girls, and I talked to them, little dreaming of the flood I was letting loose. They went mad, and that night I understood the French Revolution for the first time.

When I had finished my speech, an old grey wife sprang up and in lurid language told of the fireless hearth and foodless table ; she spoke of the children wailing for bread, and her tongue was like a two-edged sword. Another and another leapt up and told the tale of the women's burden in the battle of life, until there were a dozen women speaking at once to different groups. Then a huge Cornish woman, the mother of a big brood, lifted her voice stridently : ' To the mines, women ! to the mines ! ' It was a battle call that went to every woman's heart : their fighting blood was up, and they knew no fear. Into houses they rushed and got weapons of all sorts, and then they swept like a mob of scrub cattle gone crazy through the town to the great black frowning hill where the mines lay, and the imported labourers stood jeering. The women clambered up, their hats came off, their hair came down ; they kilted their coats and

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climbed on. Some one started a hymn that had a fighting ring in it ; they chanted it as they clambered over the rocks, through the bushes ; they fell into countless pits and trenches and clambered out again, and at last they got to the mines, and with a wild irresistible rush they went over and through everything that opposed them—just as their sons did many a long year after when they stormed the heights of Gallipoli. They did not strike scientifically, but they struck mighty hard. One man, a big rough, who had come up as a strike breaker, came out of his tent on the brow of the hill as nude as Adam before he hankered for fruit. The rough did this to shame the women ; what the women did to him need not be told here. I heard him try to tell it in sobbing whispers later on, and it was not good hearing.

The women drove all the imported men out and held the mines. The next day the strike was settled ; the men went back to their work on their own terms, which were only fair and reasonable, and peace sat like a dove on the camp. I narrowly escaped getting ten years, for letting loose that pack of she-tigers. One thing is sure, unless the issue were one of life or death, I would never again stir

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a mob of women to madness, for when once they get in action they are more to be dreaded than the wildest men. That is why I never laugh when folks talk to me of an army of women some day turning London into a little hell. The English women have not the latent fire and fierceness of the Australian women; their blood may be the same, but it has not been burnt hot by a sub-tropic sun; but they will startle the world when the hen army goes collectively crazy.

CHAPTER XII

WAR WORK IN MACEDONIA

IT'S a far cry from Broken Hill to Macedonia, and I have to skip many leaves from my life to get to it. I edited many papers ; owned three, and travelled much in the interim ; but in this outline of a life I am limited to so few words that details are impossible.

I had become a war correspondent and had also done some gun-running and had mixed up in a couple of revolutions ; also I had sampled life on a good few goldfields and had written many novels and more short stories than I now care to try and remember. I had sold these half over the world, and a short story often stood between me and an empty stomach and a night under the skies. It is the memory of that wild night among the women at Broken Hill that prompts me to jump right to Macedonia, for there I saw women in action as I hope I shall never see them again.

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The Macedonians had risen against the rule of the Turks, and I went there as a correspondent to chronicle the fighting. I had seen the Boer women helping their men during the Boer-British war, but they were very tame in comparison with the daughters of the Balkans. There were a lot of correspondents in Sofia when the real trouble broke loose, and they all wanted to go with the guerilla bands ; but General Ivan Tzontcheff, the military leader of the revolt, very wisely decided that no man should march with his men and share their secrets who was not also willing to share their risks. He said that every correspondent who went with him should shoulder a rifle and go into the fighting line and be amenable to military discipline. To do this a man had to be sworn to the Macedonian cause and colours, and from that moment his nationality would be no protection to him if he fell into Turkish hands.

Boris Tuegeff, a Russian officer of a Cossack regiment, who was acting as special correspondent for a St. Petersburg paper ; a Swiss officer, who was acting for a French paper, and I joined the rebel forces and were sworn in. We marched across the Bulgarian frontier into Macedonia at a

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spot just beyond the great monastery of Relo. We got into a skirmish the moment our band crossed the frontier and the Swiss officer was killed. Boris Tuegeff and I became sworn friends; he was a great little man, game as a bulldog, and a hard chap to work against as a correspondent; for though we were dear pals and shared food from the same stewpot when we could get it, and fought side by side, and slept under the same blanket in the snow of the Perrin mountains, yet in all matters pertaining to journalism we stole a march on each other whenever we could. Many a job I put up on him, and many a similar compliment he paid me.

That was one of the happiest periods of my life. I had a chance to measure myself with other men in action, and I grew in heart and brain. It was a superb opportunity, and I did not waste it. Of course I was only a private soldier at the start; so also were dozens of men who were officers in the Bulgarian army, who had obtained leave of absence from the Bulgarian Commander-in-Chief to go and see their friends for six months. I do not know how they squared it with their consciences; I did not ask; but there they were, fighting as common soldiers against the Turks and getting no

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pay for it. They were far and away the best privates in the ranks ; they obeyed every order without a murmur, and did menial duty without a whimper ; they were getting practical experience, for they knew then that sooner or later Bulgaria would fight Turkey. There were scores of these officers in the different guerilla bands—lieutenants, captains, majors, colonels, and at least one general. In the war between Bulgaria and Turkey which came later, those officers led their own men and knocked the wind out of the Turks by the way they got over the ground and outflanked the Sultan's troops ; they utilized the knowledge they picked up when serving either as officers or as privates in the Macedonian guerilla bands.

It was terrible hard work marching over those mountains, but my legs had been educated tramping as a prospector, and I managed to keep my end up all right until the heavy snow came ; then I should have been beaten many a time if it had not been for game little Boris Tuegeff. His legs were used to Russian snows, and he had the knack of marching through the deep drifts in the gullies, that nearly tore the muscles out of my calves and thighs. At such times he would say in his

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broken English : ' Cheer up, comrade, we'll have good soup to-night at the bivouac fire, and I'll rub your legs with bear's grease.' Then he'd take first my carbine, then my bandolier full of cartridges and we would plug along. Often, until I got used to the snow, I would drop down when we halted for the night thoroughly beaten and played out. Then Boris would light the bivouac fire and make the soup ; a good-natured soldier would cut a couple of big pine branches and make a shelter over me to keep the snow away, and I would be sleeping like a log in a few seconds. Boris would wake me when the soup was ready, and with a cup of it hot and strong in my stomach the deadly weariness would pass. Then Boris and a French volunteer named Clisson would rub me all over with bear's grease and pound my cramped muscles and knead them until I yelled with the pain of it ; after that a pipe, and then rolled in my sheep-skins I would sleep in the snow like a dead man, until the order came just before the dawn of day to begin it all over again. It was purgatory at first, but when I did get fit I was the fittest of them all ; the mountain air purified by the snow was a wonderful tonic. If I were young enough now to train for a

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glove fight, I should train in the mountains amongst the snow ; it gives you the strength of a steer, the speed of a colt, and the vitality of a tiger.

The campaign was a short one, but it was horribly brutal whilst it lasted. The Turks made up their minds to stamp out the rebellion without pity and without remorse ; when they could not get at the guerilla bands they marched upon the nearest village and gave it to the soldiery ; women and girls were dishonoured, girl children were taken to Constantinople to be sold to the head eunuchs of the rich men's harems, old women and those who were with child were given to the sword, men were flayed alive and tortured as I think no negro savages ever tortured men. I have read the history of the lives of the American pioneers among the red men of that continent, I have talked with many old-timers who knew the ways of the red savages in their hour of triumph, and I have slept in the wigwams of the red men on their reservations and studied their characteristics, and I count the Turk a far more cruel foe than the red warriors, when the Turk is up against a little people. The only difference that I could see between a Sioux warrior chief and a Turkish pasha was that the Sioux wore

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feathers in his hair, the pasha wore his in his cap. I learned to hate the Turk as I thought it was not in my nature to hate any human being. They may fight fairly against big nations, as they did against the Russians, because they are shrewd enough to know that a great army can and will pay them back in their own coin, but against small and feeble powers they act like demons. I passed one day through a valley called the Vale of Roses. In the heart of the valley nestled a pretty village. Our troops were weatherworn and tired ; we camped a day in the fields close to the village, and the people were kind to us. My feet were very bad ; a peasant woman stripped off my shoes of raw hide and poulticed my heels with herbs and drew all the inflammation out. She gave me some salve and a couple of pairs of stockings, thick and warm and clean, that she had knitted for her own husband, and I kissed her on both cheeks and said : ‘ God be with you, mother.’ All our men were treated like that. They gave us goat’s flesh and milk, tobacco and honey and home-made bread ; we marched out after our rest, and three days later the Turks marched in.

A mountain hunter came flying over the ranges

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to tell our commander, Colonel Nikoloff, of what was going on in the Vale of Roses, and we swung round and went back to fight. I had the honour of firing the first shot in the engagement. I was with a patrol in advance of the main body as we approached the village; Captain Sarakeenoff, the famous outlaw of the Balkans, was in command of the patrol. We saw a Turkish officer riding right on the sky-line, on top of a high hill that overlooked the Vale of Roses; his men we could not see. I happened to be a few yards in advance with Sarakeenoff; he said, 'Shoot me that man,' pointing to the Turk, who sat on a big brown horse silhouetted against the sky-line two hundred yards away. I fired, and the horse plunged down the hillside.

We drove the Sultan's men out of all that was left of the village into a deep ravine where the pine trees clustered so thickly that there was no room for discipline, and the mountain men went to them. In all the world there are no men who love a hand-to-hand fight with steel as the Macedonians love it. I have seen the British Tommy at work; I've seen the Muscovite, the Jap, the Chinese, the Cuban and the Yankee; I've been close up when the South



A Macedonian episode. Prayer just before going into action.

(The man with the cross marked on his chest is A. G. H.)

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American gets to work ; but of all men I know none that loves the great game as the Macedonian loves it : he's a busy person when the naked steel is out, and he is fighting a blood feud.

We went in amongst the pines with a rush and a yell, and in there the Turkish bayonets were of no use, but they fought grandly. It was hell let loose for a bit ; then above the clamour of many voices, above the rage of battle, rose a great cry, and one man's name was shouted to the skies, the name of ' Yakoff.' I had heard much of this leader by the bivouac fires ; they called him the ' Mountain Lion.' The cry came from the far end of the gorge where we had the Turks. I was going about in the shadowy twilight of the gorge with the circumspection that befits a man who loves peace. Boris Tuegeff, the little Russian—drunk as a fiddler with the excitement of battle—was running all kinds of uncanny risks. He used a short half sword, or long hunting knife, and it was most damnably dirty. He jabbered to me that the Turks were caught between two lines, ours and Yakoff's, and we pushed on. Suddenly we met a lot of the Sultan's men, determined upon cutting their way through, and our men got busy. I ran

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into something hard or something ran into me, and when I came to my senses Boris was pouring rakeer, a fiery spirit, down my throat. Men were all round yelling like maniacs, and in the centre stood the greatest figure of a man I ever saw ; a vast creature clad in sheep-skins, with a black beard that was like a horse's mane on his chest, in his right hand a Yataghan, red to the hilt—it was Yakoff, the Mountain Lion. I struggled to my feet, held by the little Russian, and saluted, and then I had the surprise packet of a life that has not been devoid of surprises.—The giant, who was the counterpart of Scott's Rhoderic Dhu, strode through his cheering men, put his hands under my armpits, and lifting me up as if I were a babe, kissed me on both cheeks, and I was made a guerilla captain, and I sat down by the foot of a big pine tree numbed by my surprise, whilst big men pranced around me and shook the snows from the pines with their yells, and dear old Boris kept stuffing the raw rakeer spirit into me, until I was my own man again.

Captain Sarakeenoff, the brigand who took Miss Stone and held her to ransom, gave me that day his wolf hunting knife ; it was slippery with blood, but not the blood of wolves. I have it now, a grim

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souvenir . . . What does a man think of in an hour like that ? . . . I only know I hoped the dear lads away in the Australian wilds, the miners, the cattlemen, and the boys in Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne would hear enough to know that I had not disgraced them, for of all men in the world I love them most, and shall to the end. I would rather have the good opinion of that grim fighting breed than wear a diadem.

We marched back to the Village of Roses—every roof was black with fire stains ; dead men and dead women lay on ruined hearths ; little children lay in the streets. Girls who had been the sport and prey of regiments ; boys—but I must draw a veil here, no one treats boys as the Turks treat them ; they were saliva-slobbering maniacs. Men who have fought against the Turks in this war in the British Army say they have fought clean. I know also what they have done in Armenia—the devils. When we marched out of the Vale of Roses we had with us women who carried rifles. I have seen many recklessly brave men in my time, but even Colonel Dan Driscoll, the king of scouts, who was amongst the bravest I have met, paled into insignificance before the bravery of those women. They

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fought like devils and were merciless. I had a dozen of them in my command when I took over my guerilla band ; they shamed the men in daring ; they were the first in the onset and the last to quit ; yet the influence of sex never left them, the harder they fought the more passionate they became, and that was the main trouble with them ; they were the female species always, and men were as willow wands in their hands. The men who fought best were their mates for the time being ; they were back to primeval forces ; they put the clock back and went away to the beginning of things. A mate called to a mate by the bivouac fire ; the man who had fought lustily awoke a responsive chord in the woman who had dared all the dangers ; it was the voice of nature defying the voice of time and progress, and convention.

They were magnificent fighters, real tigresses, but they made it awfully hard to maintain discipline. Women and men should never fight side by side even in a revolution, they should be in regiments apart. The great negro tribes and nations of Africa know this ; they make their women fight, but they band them into separate Impis always. Possibly the most magni-

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ificent body of fighting animals I ever saw was a picked Impi of amazons, belonging to the Basuto nation. I saw them drilling for a week. Their uniforms consisted of a feather stuck in their woolly heads, even the hen officers had nothing more on than that ; there wasn't enough clothing on the whole crowd to make a patch for a black eye, and I got a crick in the neck looking continually upward. That Impi was the very pick of the savage army of Basutoland. Every woman was armed with two stabbing assegais and a light battle-axe ; they were tall and strong and as straight as lances, and the way they charged up a rocky mountain slope was a revelation in athletics. Basutoland is the Switzerland of Africa, and those mountain slopes were steep. The men were grim and grisly-looking warriors, but the women had a ferocity all their own. I may be wrong, but I hold the opinion that when women do take to fighting in earnest they develop a cruelty and fearlessness that makes the wrath of men seem tame. This trait is not confined to human beings, it is found in the animal kingdom ; any cattleman of experience will tell you that a cow on the war-path is more to be dreaded than a bull or a steer. It is the same amongst fighting dogs, a bull-bitch

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will fight with more venom than a bull-dog, a she-cat is more wicked than a tom-cat, and a she-wolf infinitely more fierce than a dog-wolf. In the French Revolution the women knitted and made jests by the side of the guillotine, when the worst of the male terrorists were inclined to be pitiful.

Before I left Macedonia General Tzontcheff presented me with the carbine I had been fighting with in the presence of my brother officers; it bore and still bears the following inscription on a small gold plate—

‘To the champion for the liberty of Macedonia,
A. G. Hales.
— General Tzontcheff,
Perrin Mountains.
1908.’

I was and am proud of that, coming from such a dauntless old warrior as Ivan Tzontcheff. The political head of the revolution gave me a ‘decoration’; I believe Boris Tegueff, the gallant little Russian, was the only other man so honoured. Unfortunately the General and the political head of the moment had become bitter enemies, and each blamed the other for the beating the Turks gave us. Personally I think it was want of unity between soldiers and politicians and shortage of money and implements of war that beat us.

CHAPTER XIII

LIFE AS A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CORRESPONDENTS, when they are men of ability and courage, are a distinct gain to any nation engaged in war. In the very near future governments will be forced by the weight of public opinion to go into the whole matter of the Press versus the army, with the view of getting the best out of the Press for the public good. I have done a good deal of war work for the Press of Britain, and other countries, and can speak with knowledge. I have not the faintest hesitation in saying that as the Press is handled to-day, more than half its usefulness is thrown upon the scrap heap. The spirit that pervades nearly all army councils in regard to the Press is of the wrong order, simply because not one soldier in ten thousand understands the real functions of newspapers. Speaking personally, I can say truthfully that I never had a happier time in war than during the

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five months I recently spent on the Italian front. I had and have many friends amongst both Italian and British officers, and do not expect to forfeit their good will by writing frankly upon a subject which I understand much better than they do. Wars are not made for newspapers, though newspapers often help to make them, and if only the pressmen on the various battle fronts were given full power of action under a properly organized system, newspapers would prove a gigantic force in *winning wars*. What is badly needed is a 'Press council' created by Parliament; it should consist of men who are neither soldiers nor journalists; no person interested in any way in any publication should be eligible for a seat upon that council. This body should appoint the censors in all cases, and should have power to dismiss or punish any censor guilty of neglect of duty or of unfair dealing; before dismissing or punishing a correspondent, the censor should be compelled to report the offender to the Press council, and the correspondent should be tried for his alleged offences openly by the council in the same way that any culprit is tried in an ordinary court of law, and all evidence should be given on oath. The council should in

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time of war have power extending to the death sentence, and should consist of men capable of passing and enforcing such a sentence in cases where the conduct of correspondents warranted such measures, for the lives of soldiers should not be at the mercy of careless, criminal or incompetent war correspondents. At the same time, it should be the right of the correspondent to point out to the public such matters as affect the welfare of armies in the field. They should, in truth, be what under the existing system they are not and cannot hope to be: the nation's watch dogs over the well-being of millions who are forced to serve in order that the nations may be saved. I honestly believe we should be much nearer Berlin than Calais to-day if from the beginning of the war all the allied armies had been served by a frankly independent Press. I am fully alive to the military plea that correspondents may give away information of value to the enemy, but I do not think that is the honest reason behind military opposition to war correspondents; rather is it fear of criticism on blunders and mismanagement. I have never known a correspondent of any country to give away information of value to the enemy; the corre-

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spondent who did that should be, and I think would be, promptly shot—he certainly would be, were I a General. No correspondent should be permitted by the censor to refer ever so remotely to anything that may happen in the near or distant future; his business is with events that *have* happened, and concerning such events there is little that he can tell the enemy who have participated in the engagement, unless he goes into details which only a spy would discuss, in which event his reckoning should be the reckoning of a spy.

The power of the Press is almost limitless. All armies are kept in the field by the volume of public opinion; it is the Press that feeds public opinion—or starves it. The army and the Press must work together to ensure victory in a great war, and the war correspondents should be the very life and soul of their respective journals; this cannot be the case when the public know that criticism is stifled at the fountain head, and no matter what steps are taken to cover things up, the public must know, and does know, when whole nations are at war, no power on earth can prevent the public from knowing. I should like to see alterations made in the direction I have indicated,

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because I believe the Press could be a ten times greater power to the army if its full force were legitimately used. At present there is far too much machinery in use ; by machinery, I mean forms and ceremonies ; officers who might with advantage be used to fight the enemy are crowding one another in their efforts to perfect a Press system which they do not in the least understand ; they mean well, they are good, clean, decent-minded men, but they are soldiers, and soldiers should be utilized for the fighting end of the machine. We want and must have the best in each department in a great war, nothing less will do. I write in no hostile spirit ; my heart and soul are centred in the winning of this present war ; my dear ones are in the fighting line, and before this sees daylight I hope and expect to be there myself ; it is because I want to get the full force of the Press behind the soldiers that I put these thoughts into words, for I know we have got to get the very best out of every engine we possess if we are to win and save the world's liberty.

My first introduction to the English public as a war scribe came through the medium of the Boer-British war. My worst enemy will not deny that

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I was successful. The conditions favoured me ; there was much work in the saddle, and I was at home on a horse ; there was a great deal of riding over unmarked veldt, and my old life on the wide saltbush plains of Australia gave me an advantage over my *confrères*, which I was not slow to make use of. It was nothing to a man of my upbringing to ride all day under a burning sun, and then change horses and ride half the night over the veldt to get a special message off. I could steer by the stars ; few of the others could ; they had graduated in cities, I in the wilds ; it was only natural that I should score, I had been trained for just such a job, and had and have a constitution of iron. England being the only country I ever lived in that ever made me ill. One scarcely likes to speak of the Boer-British struggle as a war in these days of 1918, and yet it was not devoid of thrills ; a bullet was just as nasty to run into in that campaign as in the world war, only there were not so many of them. I got one in Africa that came very near to putting finis to my little book, and in a way I asked for it. I was rated as a Major for the period of the war, and on the day I collected my little leaden souvenir, I volunteered to go with Major

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Lambie and find out what the Boers were doing to a Company of Australians who had apparently been cut off. We galloped into a basin surrounded by low kopjes, and when about half-way across, Boers rode out on all sides to cut us off; we tried to make a running fight of it; the enemy were splendidly chivalrous, they fired all round and over us, but we refused to surrender; then we got it. Major Lambie got seven bullets through his head, and never knew what hit him, poor chap. I galloped on, but not for long: a couple of bullets got me and my horse at the same time, and we both got it in the head; my horse turned over on top of me, and cracked my right shoulder. When the kindly Boers came up, they dug two holes; Lambie was laid to rest, but when they straightened me out from under my horse, they discovered signs of life and took me back to their laager. There have been times since then when I have envied Lambie. A more kindly, chivalrous, manly lot of people than my captors proved to be, I have never met; it was a thundering shame we ever made war on such a people. Whilst I was a prisoner and wounded, I formed the opinion that they were a kindly, honest, simple, unsophisticated

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folk, their men brave and their women gentle and pitiful to those in pain. I hold that opinion yet.

The cruel thing about war is that when once you are in it, individual opinion does not count ; a man has to do his duty, and his duty is to his country, but he can do it like a man or a beast ; it depends upon the individual. I have nothing on my conscience as far as the Boers are concerned, thank God. That I did my duty, the following letter which I received from the commander of the British Scouts will bear witness. Here it is verbatim :

‘A. G. Hales. Sir, I have a vacancy for a commissioned officer in my corps of Scouts. You have shared our hardships and dangers. I think you’re the man to fill the position ; will you accept ?’

I prize that letter because the man who wrote it was one who made light of danger to himself, and I had seen him juggle with death, as he is doing still in this year of grace 1918—may he win through !

I got all, or nearly all, the best newspaper ‘copy’ I gleaned in the campaign whilst serving with the

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Scouts. We had to be well in front of our division all the time, to be of any use to our General, and being right up in front enabled me to get pickings that never come to a man any other way.

The individual correspondent had better chances to show what he was made of then than now; besides, such a lot of the work to-day is done in motor-cars, and it is your car and your chauffeur, not you yourself, that are the deciding factors. I did not have a car of my own on the Italian front, and only had what I could hire, or what the courtesy of the Italian Government placed at my disposal. Most of the other correspondents had their own cars, and I had the South African advantages turned upside down with a vengeance, and did not like it. At one period I was billeted far from the post office for six weeks, and had to walk in and out about seventeen kilometres daily; when you are footing it and see all the others whizzing by in fine cars, it may be good for the health, but it is bad for the temper—damn bad. They were awful good chaps, those other correspondents; none of them tried to run over me when they passed the old timer on the track. Did I like it? You can bet your immortal souls I

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did not, but I bit on the bullet and did it, but it was a killing handicap in a game like war correspondence, where speed tells. Out of evil, good comes—sometimes. An Italian officer who noticed me marching day after day remarked: 'A man who can march as you do is fit to fight, signor,' and he backed an appeal I had put in for a commission in General Garibaldi's brigade, and at the time of writing I am waiting in hope that I shall get my chance in a good stiff fighting regiment.

In the old days of war correspondence, the life was harder and rougher than it is to-day, and the man who could stand hardships scored. A good many of the pressmen either succumbed to hardships, or were killed in action; the African veldt covered quite a lot of them at the finish: Stevens, Spooner, Adams, Lambie, Westgarth, and many another good man, but that was part of the great game; they took their chance, and paid the price.

I made considerable fame, no money worth speaking about, a few good friends, and some enemies in that campaign. I looked upon it as an added experience, something to store up for future use, should the Anzac lands ever need me. Chris-

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tian de Wet impressed me greatly by his uncanny skill as a guerilla leader; we were eternally 'drawing cordons' round him—in the despatches; the trouble was that when the cordons were complete, de Wet was always on the outside, and he and his veldtsmen must have had many a hearty laugh at our expense. It seemed a strange coincidence, when I found myself bivouacked close up under the Alps in Italy, to learn that Christian de Wet's son was in the immediate vicinity, fighting for the British. I did not get a chance to meet this young man, but heard him spoken of as an officer of dauntless courage and 'unlimited resource, a true chip of the old block; I should have liked to have shaken hands with him, for his father was courteous and kindly to me when I was a wounded prisoner in a Boer laager. General Delarey impressed me as being a really great soldier; I think he would have shone on great battlefields like unto these we are familiar with now in Europe; he was capable of big things, and big generals are not plentiful—as a matter of fact, nothing in the whole course of my nomadic life has astonished me so much as the poor quality of intellect possessed by generals in most armies; it is a never-ending

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source of wonder to me how they get to their position ; their strategy (?) when they attempt to manœuvre troops is as ' wide open ' as the Atlantic ; if they ever fool any one except themselves, it is because there is something exceedingly wooden at the head of affairs on the other side. Nine-tenths of the glowing stories served up to the public concerning wonderful feats of strategy are ' mush ' and nothing but mush.

After the South African campaign, I went to the Balkans, but have dealt with that elsewhere. I also visited, either in my professional or in a private capacity, many of the military and naval reviews.

It is always good for one to confess one's errors. When I saw the German armies manœuvring *en masse*, advancing in close formation upon positions covered from end to end with machine guns as well as heavy artillery, I did not think the German Army, or any other army composed of mortal men, would face shotted guns with elbows touching, and not collapse under the shock. They have done it, and so have British and French and Italian troops, and one can only wonder what becomes of all the lead and iron that is vomited into living ranks—only a moiety of it reaches the soldiers. The

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French Army, though not numerically in the same category as the German, impressed me as being a wonderful combination of machine-like precision and adaptability. The French officers were individualists, the German the centre of a vast system. At one big German sham fight, at which the Kaiser acted as referee, I saw German batteries consisting of their heaviest guns, moved into a great ploughed area; it had been raining for three days and nights, and was raining heavily at the time; the guns stuck fast and could not be moved; the Kaiser declared them out of action; a little ordinary foresight on the part of the officer in command of the artillery would have prevented the blunder. Later I saw German cavalry attempt to charge across similar ground, and their horses could not raise a trot by the time they got to the enemy; they also were put out of action by the Kaiser. I cabled what I saw to my paper, and was severely censured by the Kaiser's orders for doing so. Did the German machine become so perfect in the intervening years that no such mistakes were made in war, or did the allied Generals fail to take advantage of similar errors of judgment?

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Of all the fleets I saw, none impressed me more than the Japanese ; it was so workmanlike, and all its methods so simple ; the golden rule of common sense seemed over all its various departments ; ‘ all for use, and nothing for show ’ was its motto, and the way it went through the Russian Navy was an eye-opener to mankind ; it taught the world that a new force had arisen, and its star was in the East. The weeks I spent with the British Navy I count as amongst the happiest of my life, but I formed the opinion, and hold it now, that the hand of the politician casts too great a shadow over our Navy, and if ever disaster comes on sea, we shall owe it to the meddling and muddling of politicians who often know less about ships of war and the personnel thereof than a ragman’s donkey knows about a laundry. The ships of the Russian Navy were good, some of them great, but the bulk of the officers were rotten with corruption long before the war with Japan ; they lacked *esprit de corps*, and every little cabal was out for itself. A wholesale shooting was what the Russian Navy wanted ; its officers in bulk were a disgrace to a great and noble profession. The German Navy was an enigma to me ; a German warship did not

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look like any other warship on the inside ; everything seemed to run more to science than to seamanship, and yet no one could doubt they were sailors, and good ones. On a ship of the Kaiser's they could not cook an egg without a mathematical formula, and yet as war goes to-day, those things may spell victory, for this seems to be an era of scientists. Time, and a great naval battle, alone can solve these things.

I was present at the famous meeting at Dantzic of the Kaiser and the Tzar of Russia, when William of the Red Hand gave a naval display in order to impress and, I think, overawe the feeble Muscovite monarch. On that occasion no correspondents were permitted to go out to the fleet, but I made up my mind to take a chance with the War Lord, knowing that at the worst he could not shoot me. I had just been present at the *military* manœuvres, and had my permits liberally ornamented with sealing wax. Hiring a launch on the day of the naval review, I walked aboard with the assurance of an Admiral, and flourishing my *military* permit, ordered the skipper of the launch to go full steam ahead and make for the fleet, then, lighting a cigar, I walked forward and brusquely

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refused to answer any questions. It was rude, but rudeness is the one thing the German official mind fully understands and appreciates. The trick worked like a charm. Right down the waterway between the two lines of magnificent warships, my cockle-shell steered its impudent way, until we passed close alongside the *Wilhelm der Grosse*, the ship of war on which the redoubtable Kaiser and his staff were standing. An officer of high rank hailed us, and my launch came to a standstill, like a galloping horse pulled suddenly upon its haunches. The Kaiser came to the side and looked down upon us, and I at once stood rigidly to attention and saluted. He returned the salute, and I must do him the justice to say that he looked every inch an Emperor. The general expression of his face was hard and vindictive, and it struck me then that he could be cruel from choice if the whim seized him. My papers were demanded, and of course handed over. Then the band began to play. The naval officer who had hailed my launch examined my papers, and of course saw at a glance that I had no authority to be there; I do not know what he said to the fat skipper of the launch, nor do I know what that most excellent person

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said to me—he might have been praying for rain for all that I understood; his face was like a full moon in midsummer; he was absolutely scarlet with rage; but I had not been in China for nothing: often had I been baffled by Chinamen who smiled blandly and said in their innocent (?) way ‘No savvee.’ I worked that trick off on the Germans, and looking as great a fool as I knew how, said, ‘I did not understand.’ The launch was ordered to go ahead and land me at the nearest point. Down the whole length of that imposing array of war craft she cluttered like a frightened hen, and with solemn face I stood there and saluted every blessed ship as I passed, as if I were an Admiral at least, and giggled inside myself at the curious faces that were turned upon me. I have left many vessels in my time without much ceremony, but never one less ceremoniously than that launch. When I offered to shake hands with the fat skipper before landing, he began spitting all round me, and in between spits he found a new name for me, and each was worse than the last. But I had seen the grand fleet, and the Emperor, and the Tzar, and did not worry over the wrath of the red-faced man, especially as I had a shrewd

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idea that the names he had called me were angelic compared with the names the naval officer had called *him*. Naval officers do not use bad language as a rule, but when they *do* let out a reef in that direction, they can bring the bark off a tree; I know, for once in the China Seas a British naval officer accused me of having been part of a gun-running crew, and when I told him I had only been distributing Gospel tracts to the heathen, he said things that made me think Britain might be better employed distributing Gospel tracts amongst her own sons than in sending them to other nations. Strangely enough, I met that same officer on board a British man-o'-war years afterwards, when I was an Admiral's guest; he did not say a word, but the twinkle in his eyes told me he had not forgotten.

Only four times in my life did I ever get close to that sinister figure destined to live in history as the modern Attila. I had gone to Berlin to chronicle some big ceremony which necessitated the presence of the Kaiser on the railway platform. I was there early, and stood for hours amongst the officials; then growing weary, I slipped through a little gate that led to a narrow roadway at the

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back of the station. I got off all right, but the sentry would not let me on again, and I turned down the narrow street just in time to meet the Household Guard on their superb war horses clattering in. I stopped short; the troop halted; the officer at their head bounded from the saddle, as fine a figure of a soldier as I ever looked at. It was the War Lord of all Germany, helmeted and spurred, his big sabre at his side. His eyes fell upon me in the moonlight as I stood saluting; with swift firm strides he passed on, and I passed out, very glad to escape a reprimand for being where I was. That he is one of the greatest curses humanity has ever known, is my firm and unalterable opinion, but he carried himself like a warrior. Once at a review of his troops I saw him walk up to his big Australian charger, a splendid chestnut nearly sixteen hands high, and leap to saddle with all his war gear on his back, as lightly and cleverly as any acrobat. Not many soldiers possessing two sound arms could have done it half as well. I say this emphatically, after having seen pretty well all the crack cavalry regiments of the world, and having spent hours on end in some of the best military riding schools on this planet.

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My work in the Russo-Japanese war was hampered by the restrictions of the Japanese authorities ; I fancy nearly every European correspondent who went to the East can say the same. I had some exciting days trying to get into Port Arthur without permission, but failed, and was rather glad than otherwise to leave the theatre of war. The impression I carried away with me concerning the Japanese was, and is, that their generals are far and away the cleverest strategists alive ; they simply played with the Russian generals, and outwitted them at every end of the game. They fight more on the Napoleonic principle than do modern Europeans ; they recognize the enormous value of a leader's personality in a great battle, and their generals are eternally in the thick of the fighting, ready to take instant advantage of any error of judgment the enemy may make ; they are right on the spot all the time, and guide the progress of a battle according to the progress of events. In Napoleon's day the leading generals of Europe made war on much the same principle as do modern European generals—on a set plan from maps and figures ; Napoleon saw the unwisdom of this, and his generals were sent into the

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thick of things to work out a general plan outlined by himself beforehand, but ready to snatch any advantage that might occur in the course of the fighting, and always in the midst of things, to inspire and encourage their men, to carry them on to an assault, or to hold them steady when they appeared disheartened. Therein lay one of the vital secrets of Napoleon's success, and it is the secret of Japan's success. If a leader came on the scene to-day who would sacrifice generals as Napoleon did, he would have as great a measure of success as the all-conquering Corsican, who, when twitted with having lost twenty generals in one day, replied: 'Yes, but I won the battle, and there are plenty more generals where I got those from—in the ranks.' The Japanese infantry are remarkably good, their artillery very fine indeed, but it is the perfection of their organization that makes them such formidable opponents. They always look well ahead and are never in a muddle, but speaking of them as a people, I think their greatest asset is the reality of their patriotism: their wealthy classes did not, in any of the wars I am conversant with, pillage their own people; there was never a *profiteering class* in Japan in

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war time ; had any such attempted to work off their unholy practices whilst the nation was struggling for existence, the people would have torn them limb from limb. I am not speaking figuratively ; I mean literally what I say : the people would have dragged them from their houses and rent them asunder with their naked hands. Such a nation must be hard to vanquish, no matter who their opponents may be. Their sailors are as good as their soldiers, and more than once in the war with Russia they displayed the Nelson touch. Small wonder they have taken as their emblem a *rising sun*. Admiral Togo, who had command of their fleet when I was in Japan, was a man of tremendous personality, one of those rare individuals born to command ; he would have made his mark in any country, in any era. As a seaman, I think he was the greatest the world has known since Nelson ; he could be rash to the verge of recklessness when occasion demanded it, and he could be of all men the most careful, for he had a head of ice and a heart of fire ; he never 'dared' halfway ; when once his mind was made up concerning an enterprise, he threw heart and soul into it, and carried it through at all costs

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and all hazards. Yet no tiger watching a game trail could display more unwearying patience; he could wait for the right moment to slip his cable and strike, and when he struck, it was with the might of a thunderbolt. It is worthy of note that he fought his battles in precisely the same order of battle as the old school of Dutch admirals who once ruled the seas. Japan had many minor naval heroes in the Russo-Japanese war, chief of whom was Hiroshi. This officer carried chivalry to an extent seldom met with in any age; he was a lion amongst men, and in his death—deathless. It was he who sank the ships in the fairway of Port Arthur, right under the guns of the forts; he had carried out this most hazardous expedition with complete satisfaction, and was just stepping over the side of the last ship, which was sinking fast, when he missed his Quartermaster, a seaman of courage equal to his own, who had been with him on many desperate enterprises. Hiroshi remembered that the Quartermaster had gone below to superintend the scuttling of the ship, and fearing the man might have met with some mishap below, the gallant officer ordered all hands to the boats and rushed below. He found his Quartermaster,

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who had been hurt, and helped him to the deck, and all the time the Russian batteries were raining iron. Hiroshi handed the Quartermaster to the waiting boat, and springing on the rail of the sinking ship, was about to step into the boat, when a shell cut him in half. He died as he had lived ; all his life had been filled with superb deeds done for his country or for comrades ; he was the most universally loved man I ever came in contact with.

I may mention one small incident here, which goes to show how small the world is. As I stood watching the funeral rites of the great Hiroshi, I found myself next to ' Jimmy ' Hare, the world-renowned Press photographer, and we exchanged hasty greetings. A week or two ago, in an Italian town that was close to the enemy lines, and had had its share of bombing, I was standing easy, pulling at my pipe, when a hand fell upon my shoulder and Jimmy Hare's voice exclaimed : ' Hullo, old wanderer, it's a far cry from here to Japan, eh ? ' and then we fell a-talking, as men will who have knocked about the world, of strange cities and celebrated men. He told me incidents of dear old Jack London's passing, and of the goodly

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ranche Jack had left behind him—a ranche I mean to visit some day, and I told him of men he had missed who had gone west, and we both agreed that in all our wanderings we had never met a man who, by virtue of his dauntless courage, pure patriotism and simple unselfishness, had so impressed himself upon a whole nation as did Hiroshi, the idol of the little island in the Eastern Seas.

Between the Russo-Japanese war and the World War I travelled much; amongst other things I lectured in England, South Africa, Australia and South America. In the latter country the greatest sorrow of a life that has not been all rose-strewn came to me, for there my wife passed into the shadows, and—but let that pass; there be some things which a man can only dare to speak of to his God, or to think of only when alone with the stars, the wonderful, mysterious stars that have looked down on so many human tragedies since first they lit the world with splendour. My comrade left me—she who was dainty of form, beautiful of face, and stainless as the flush of dawn, the most unselfish wife and mother the old brown earth has known. If I have done any good thing in my life, if I have strewn a few flowers where thorns

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grew, if I have made the rough-hewn path a little less rough for man or maid, for child or matron, if I have not altogether wasted my life and the gifts the gods gave, it is because the 'Giver of Gifts' gave me a mate whose soul was the Creator's daintiest masterpiece. I have often raged with the bitter wrath that is the heritage of the Corsican strain of blood that is in me, when fortune has let me down and destiny has brought my castles to the earth; but when I remembered the mate that had been given me, I knew that I had been favoured far above all other men whom I have known, and I have known many whom the world calls great.

South America is a wonderful country; there is nothing that the heart of man can desire that cannot be obtained there by the industrious and the daring. The capital of Argentina, Buenos Aires, is the Paris of the Southern hemisphere, in some respects it is the finest city in the world; the dressing of the important shop windows leaves nothing to be desired in regard to taste, magnificence and beauty; all that is best in all the great capitals of Europe has been copied and often improved upon by native taste. The La Plata River at the point opposite the capital is over thirty miles

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wide, so there is no lack of water ; the road leading from the capital to Las Palmas, where the race-course is situated, will in time surpass anything in Europe : stately palm trees line it on both sides and flowering shrubs deck its paths ; money has been lavished upon it in prodigal fashion to make it a promenade of beauty. The racecourse is an excellent one, the horses good and the sport provided of a high order of excellence.

The first time I went to South America, I did not go as a correspondent ; my visit had to do with a revolution, and publicity of any sort was neither my desire nor intent ; it is an episode which may be passed over in silence as one of the foolish things men do—and regret. The second time I went South I put in nearly all my time in Argentina, and there are few countries where I have met with more kindness. In the matter of newspapers, the Argentine is one of the most up-to-date countries in the world. In my time the great dailies were *La Prensa*, *La Nacion* and *La Argentina*. They are printed in Spanish, and can vie with any journal in the world for general excellence. The establishment of *La Prensa* is princely in all its details. The two English daily

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journals are *The Standard* and *The Herald*. All the papers encourage wholesome sport; cricket and football flourish there, and the crack football teams could give the best British clubs an exciting game. Some of the cricketers are also up to county form. Boxing has not gone ahead very fast, because the bulk of the population is Italian or Spanish, and those races rather despise glove fighting and fighters, amateur or professional, but wrestling the populace goes mad over, if it is high-class and of the strenuous order; but let no third-rate wrestler from any country go there thinking to pick up easy money; they are used to the best, and will pay any price for the best, but a third-rater would be hooted off the boards in short order. I saw and wrote upon matches of all kinds whilst there, and speaking generally can say that the sport provided is of a very high order indeed.

CHAPTER XIV

LIFE IN THE LATIN REPUBLICS

DUELLING is still in vogue in the Latin republics, nor do I think it is likely to die out. I am not sure that it would be good if it did. As a corrective to bad manners and evil tongues, there is much to be said for the 'duello'; it may be argued that a beast who was a good shot or a good swordsman would be an intolerable nuisance; my experience does not support that view, and I have travelled in many countries where duelling is not tabooed; your good swordsman or pistol shot is usually the best-mannered man in town; he is conscious of his power and seldom abuses it. Of course there are exceptions. The same remarks will apply to boxing: I have known, and still know, some of the greatest boxers—amateur or professional; they rarely abuse their skill. One of the reasons for this is that a swords-

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man or a boxer, before becoming proficient, has to have practical experience, and the experienced person knows that no matter how good he may be, there is always the chance that he may get the knobby end of the stick if he makes trouble, for no matter how good you are at any game, it is a million to one there is a better man sitting around somewhere. I hold the opinion that good manners deteriorated amongst the favoured classes in England when duelling went out, and the solicitor came in. Mixed as the populations of the Latin republics are, quarrelling is not at all common, but occasionally a duel with rapiers or pistols takes place; a few happened during my sojourn. One that occurred in Brazil was amusing in its way: a certain middle-aged Frenchman, who possessed a large and exceedingly rotund figure, made a practice of escorting his exceedingly pretty young wife upon her shopping expeditions. The French lady was always the picture of daintiness, but her spouse, who suffered a good deal from the heat, generally looked a trifle grotesque, and as he invariably dressed in snow-white drill, the fashionable quarter of Rio de Janeiro nicknamed him the 'Duck.' He certainly did cut an ungraceful figure

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as he lumbered or waddled beside the petite figure of his lady. There was a certain shop, kept also by a Frenchman in Rio, where the oddly assorted pair always repaired on their visits; it was situated well off the magnificent main thoroughfare of the capital, which is one of the noblest streets in the world; in order to reach it you had to thread your way along a very narrow and exceedingly busy side street, where you were sure to be jostled in a good-natured sort of way, and equally sure of polite apologies in French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese. The shop in question was one known to all dealers in Brazilian birds, shells or reptiles (dead, not living); there you could pick up extraordinarily beautiful specimens of humming-bird life of every shade and hue, mounted as hatpins or any other purpose dear to the feminine soul. The *chic* French lady must have had a host of friends if she sent away as presents all the beautiful things she purchased on her many visits; possibly she made a little profit as a private dealer. Now it entered into the souls of some of the gilded youth of Rio, and of some who were not quite so young as dyed moustaches tried to proclaim them, to try and woo

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the little French dame from her lawful allegiance. All sorts of stratagems were brought into play, but success did not crown the attempts. Madame, in spite of her ever ravishing smile, was adamant. The 'Duck' did not see, or had sufficient faith in his lady to ignore the gallantries practised, and continued to amble amiably by her side, mopping his big red face with a large golden-coloured silk handkerchief, as usual. The gallants became bolder as they noticed how exceedingly peaceful the 'Duck' was. They met her at street corners, and in the press of the crowds tried to pass *billets doux* to her; these perfumed notes fell on the side walk, and the 'Duck' never looked at them. Three gallants, one of whom was old enough to have found himself a worthier occupation, determined upon a *ruse de guerre*, in order to separate Madame from the 'Duck.' In the press of the crowd in the narrow thoroughfare, one of them, walking behind the 'Duck,' dropped the broken shell of a small Brazilian nut down his neck—not a hard thing to accomplish, as the 'Duck' invariably wore very loose neck gear, and had a bad habit of walking, or rolling, along with his head pushed forward and neck bent. The shell of the small brown Brazilian

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nut, when broken, is very hard and sharp at the edges ; it could not well be worse if it were made of glass. As soon as the shell worked down a few inches, it did its intended work. The stout Frenchman pulled up and got busy removing the torment, and whilst doing so, a fourth conspirator who was in the plot tried to engage Madame in conversation, she having forged ahead of her spouse. As soon as the ' Duck ' discovered what it was that had found access to his person, he looked round with his old fatuous smile rippling the red sea of his face, and saw the three conspirators trying to conceal their grins. Balancing the nut-shell in the palm of his hand, the ' Duck ' looked from it to the impudent features of his tormentors, and it was not the first time by a good many that the placid elderly gentleman had looked at them, though they had not noticed it. He gave vent to a funny little chuckle. ' Ah ! ' he exclaimed gleefully, ' where there are nuts, one must expect to find monkeys.' Placing the broken shell carefully inside his hat, he went on in search of his pretty wife, his exceedingly clumsy gait causing the gallants much merriment as he lumbered through the crowd. His progress was stopped

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at a cross street, and again the annoyance was repeated. This time the 'Duck,' still smiling, addressed his pursuers: 'You would be more at home swinging by your tails from the forest trees, Messieurs; a bad joke is never worth repeating.' Again he placed the shell in his hat, and went his way. The gallants felt very secure; a man with a spirit so tame did not deserve a wife so ravishingly beautiful—in such a tropical country, too. The third nut did not go down the Frenchman's neck, it rolled from his collar to the pavement; he collected it as if it had been made of rubies, and placed it with the other two, and by this time his wife, having turned back, found him still smiling.

That evening, as the eldest of the gallants was standing in the vestibule of one of the best hotels in Rio, a very austere Italian gentleman accosted him politely, showed him a broken Brazilian nut, and asked for the names of his seconds. A chip off an iceberg could not have been colder than the stately Italian messenger of war. The gallant was not uneasy concerning the result, when the duel was fixed to take place with rapiers as the weapons; he was lithe and active and very quick upon his feet, and—well, they had often seen the

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fat Frenchman falling over his own feet in the street. The duel took place a few miles out of Rio ; the party went down the wonderful harbour, second only in all the world to Sydney harbour for natural loveliness, and a glade was selected which for sheer beauty the map of the universe might be searched in vain to find an equal to. Nature rioted everywhere ; the soft sighing of the nearby sea droned upon the listening ears ; parrots of rainbow plumage flashed from tree to tree around the glade ; humming-birds that looked like dazzling jewels hung on pendant wings above the flowers of the convolvuli that twined around the tree stems ; above, a sky of a deeper blue than one sees above the Alps of Italy, and below a long, oval-shaped patch of velvet green grass, that had the softness of moss and the spring of resilience of netted wire. In the centre of this oval space stood the two men, stripped to the waist, a long, thin strip of grey-blue steel in each right hand ; the seconds, the surgeons, and three or four others stood on the edges of the green carpet. The ' Duck,' still wearing the kindly smile that nothing could rub off, looked big, clumsy, unwieldy. The gallant, with tense, frowning face and lithe,

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muscular figure, might have posed for a sculptor as the perfect fencer. The signal was given by agreement, as the men stood some ten paces apart ; the ' Duck ' lumbered forward ; no cart-horse, weary with a long day's work, could have covered the ground more heavily ; the gallant came with short, crisp steps that kept his body in perfect poise. The steel touched—not noisily clashing, but in soft, sinuous, caressing fashion, winding and slithering up and down like serpents at play. The men were feeling each other, eyes looking into eyes all the time. They stepped back, disengaging, as if by mutual consent, after that first long, steady feel of the steel, their naked bodies gleaming strangely white in the sunlight. It was the big Frenchman who reopened hostilities. This time he moved on his toes ; gone was the old shuffling gait of the streets, gone the indecision of step ; the touch of steel on steel had wakened some dormant faculty in him, galvanizing him to life and motion. He moved in and stepped out ; he flashed to one side, changed his foot and recrossed his enemy's front with the speed and grace of a ballet dancer, his point threatening all the time ; now it was within a hairsbreadth of the gallant's throat, now

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so close to his heart that a piece of tissue paper could scarce have been inserted between flesh and steel. He kept his enemy wheeling in a circle, going round him like a cooper round a cask, and keeping the gallant frantically busy parrying a multitude of lightning thrusts. Surely in all the history of duelling there had never been a greater change than that which had transformed the stout, middle-aged, placid man of the street into the winged fury of the fighting arena. Again and again he touched his man just enough to draw blood. Then he changed his tactics and let the gallant do the attacking, and he seldom parried with the steel, he did his defensive work with his feet, until a look of utter hopelessness crept into the gallant's eyes ; he died half a dozen times in the next ten minutes, for the Frenchman's point just broke the skin over vital places, and yet the big man forbore to kill ; he knew how to punish. Suddenly, after a magically quick parry, his point was pressed right over the gallant's heart ; one turn of the wrist, and the end would come.

‘ Does Monsieur desire his life ? ’

Monsieur *did*, and made no bones about admitting

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it ; he was limp from head to heel, and wet with sweat ; his sword point had dropped to the ground ; he looked the perfect picture of a thoroughly cowed and beaten man, for he had died many times that morning. The Frenchman, still smiling his droll smile, put another query :

‘ Is Monsieur still fond of nuts ? ’

The gallant intimated that he had no further use for fruit of that kind.

‘ I am profoundly sorry to hear it, for if Monsieur wants his life, which belongs to me, he must climb into the fork of the tree behind him and crack me three Brazilian nuts with his teeth. I called Monsieur a monkey yesterday, I must make my words good.’

The gallant half lifted his rapier ; the Frenchman’s arm grew rigid, his point broke through the skin over the heart, a little trickle of blood ran down the white chest.

Five minutes later the gallant was sitting astride the limb of a tree a few feet from the ground cracking nuts, whilst the spectators cracked jokes. That night he left Rio for his own country, never to return, and when the Frenchman’s Italian second called at the residences of the other gallants, he

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found that they also had made a hasty departure for lands across the sea.

After that episode, many men of various nationalities learnt to adore Madame, but they all did it at a distance ; there is no case on record in the chronicles of Rio of any gallant ever offering her a nut. Later when she and her husband returned to their beloved Paris, from which he had been exiled for political reasons, they found that the story had leaked out, and considerable as his fame was, the taming of the nut cracker added not a little to his popularity ; it was a proof of power properly used.

Thousands of gold and silver miners and prospectors in North and South America, China, Australia and New Zealand knew old ' Bill ' McAdams, one of the cleverest mining engineers in all the earth. I met him in many lands, first on Broken Hill, then in China, and crossed his track for the last time in Bolivia. He went west in Uruguay. From Klondyke to Coolgardie, prospectors knew and liked him ; he was very human and had human failings, but he had a big heart and a big brain, this whimsical Yankee treasure seeker. In South America he was once employed to go and

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inspect an alleged gold mine on which many thousands of pounds had been wasted. No man on the planet could teach McAdams anything [worth knowing about a gold mine. He took his report to the directors, and waited whilst they read it; he had condemned the concern root and branch, and hinted pretty plainly that it had been a swindle from the first.

‘ You say the mine is no good for anything, Mr. McAdams ? ’ remarked the president.

‘ Waal, no, I don’t exactly say that,’ drawled Bill; ‘ it might come in mighty handy for a cemetery some day, if folks start a town up that way; I guess it’s no use f’r anything else, unless maybe you think of turnin’ th’ company from a gold-minin’ concern into a rabbit-breeding company—it’d make a slap-up rabbit warren.’

They were not grateful, those men—folks seldom are when you give them the cold truth and it runs counter to their intents. They gave the old miner the key of the street and an urgent invitation to leave the town at dusk. Bill shrugged his lean shoulders, and decided not to quit the town. He knew they were afraid he would expose their swindle, but he was no talker for talking’s sake.

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Soon he found that if he did not go, he was to be driven out. One of the directors who had been making a fat thing out of that rotten mine for years, was a well-known duellist, and he made life very sultry for McAdams, and at last openly challenged him to a duel. Bill looked the man over in his quizzical way for quite a long time, then in his eternal drawl, which always, even in the most serious moments of life, carried a hint of hidden mirth, he said :

‘ Well, señor, I guess I’ve got to die some day in some fashion ; may as well hand in my checks this fashion as any other—it’s high-toned, anyway.’

The duellist bowed ; he was an excellent swordsman and a dead shot and naturally cruel ; he had no doubts concerning the result—neither had Bill. The duel was fixed for noon next day. Just as the meeting was breaking up, McAdams put a question :

‘ Gentlemen, as I am the challenged party, I think it’s up to me to choose the weapons, eh ? ’

Every one, even the challenger, agreed that this was his due.

‘ Waal,’ drawled William in his serious manner, ‘ I guess it’s all fixed. I’ll be on hand at noon to-morrow at the appointed place, and I’ll bring

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the tools. Now if any gentleman'll join me in a cocktail, I'll feel honoured. After that I'm goin' to fix up an undertaker; I don't want to leave *my* funeral obsequies to any chance-met stranger. Can any one direct me to a corpse merchant with good ideas concernin' buryin' f'r cash in advance ? '

At the appointed time and hour Old Bill walked on the scene carrying a rather bulky parcel under his arm. His opponent bowed ; every one bowed ; never were people more polite on the eve of a killing. Bill had brought no one with him except the undertaker. The principals divested themselves of their upper garments, then McAdams, without a smile disturbing his hatchet face, knelt on the grass and, undoing his bulky parcel, produced two six-pound American axes, the edges of which he had ground until he could have shaved himself with either of them. His opponent's eyes began to bulge. Evidently this Americano mining man was *loco*, something was wrong with his head ; he suggested as much ; Old Bill remarked that he did not think so. Stripped to the middle, he swung one of the axes, and few men in any of the lumber camps could handle an eight-pound axe as he could ; his fame as an axeman was known from Montreal

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to Maine. Lean, wiry, made of whipcord and fencing wire, he looked a formidable figure as he balanced the axe; then he made it whirr, as he spun it round his head in a circle of light; checking the circle, he smote downwards at a sapling and peeled the bark off as neatly as a barber takes lather from a cheek. He shifted his poise and stripped the other side of the sapling. A twig about as thick as a lead pencil hung down from the trunk; without more than a glance he struck and split that twig in twain. Then with a tiger-like spring he leapt to a green tree and buried the blade of the axe halfway to the eye that holds the handle in the tough wood, a quick wrench and the axe was free, and he had struck again and taken a huge 'bite' out of the trunk. Then he whirled the formidable weapon round his head as if it were a toy, then tossed it high, caught it in his left hand as it came down and shore through a good-sized bough with a motion so quick that the watching eyes could scarcely follow his motions. It was an exhibition that only a master could have given, yet his breath was coming as evenly as a babe breathing as he finished.

'The balance is not quite perfect, but it's a good

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tool ; try it, señor, whilst I get the feel of the other one. You can then take your choice.'

The duellist retreated ; his lower lip had dropped, and all that could be seen of his eyes was the whites.

' It's—it's not a weapon for a—a gentleman,' he gasped.

' Was Robert Bruce, King o' Scotland, a gentleman ? ' demanded Bill.

The seconds agreed that he must have been.

' Was Richard Cœur de Lion, King of England, a gentleman ? ' was the imperturbable Yankee's next query, addressed directly to his antagonist.

The duellist said he didn't know, but the name sounded respectable.

' They were gentlemen, both of 'em, and they fought with axes, and I am a gentleman, and I fight with an axe ; you yourself admitted I had the choice of weapons.'

Then the old pioneer took an axe in each hand and did things with them that made the duellist's hair stand on end ; he said there had been a mistake somewhere, and magnanimously offered his hand. The merry twinkle came back to the old pioneer's eyes, it was never far away.

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‘Will you pay the undertaker’s charges?’ he whispered.

‘I—I don’t want an undertaker, señor.’

‘You *will* if you don’t pay,’ growled Bill, and his hand fondled the axe.

That settled it. That night the town rocked with laughter as the story sped from mouth to mouth, and whimsical Bill McAdams, prince of good fellows and king of mining engineers, became so popular he would have had an even money chance for the presidency of the State, had he only been naturalized.

I went to a bull fight in Uruguay with the old pioneer, and whilst we sat in the noble arena waiting for the sport (?) to commence, he told me the story I have just told you; I only wish I could have written it as he told it; never was there such a *raconteur* as he; the unluckiest man that ever hunted the yellow dust, he yet exuded laughter from every pore in his skin. He could curse too when his nature was stirred to the depths, and that bull fight (?) stirred him. Even my placid temper was roused, and, lover of the gentle word that turneth away wrath as I am, I scattered a few gems of language amidst that crowd before

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the sport (?) was over—and nearly came home on a shutter. I have no particular love for bulls, and if a couple of them took it into their heads to have a fight to the death, I could sit on a fence and enjoy the spectacle—providing they were not *my* bulls. But when a poor brute is turned into an arena with its horns sawn off far enough from the points to make them blunt, so that they cannot rip up a man, and when a dozen gaily-dressed mountebanks torment that bull to madness by throwing darts that stick all over the animal and burn like hot steel in its blood, then all my sympathy is with the bull and all my loathing for the curs who throw the darts, and when chased vault over the barriers into safety. All my loathing, did I say? Nay, I was wrong: a good deal of loathing and contempt goes to the men and women who look on, shriek with laughter and applaud whilst the bull is tortured to make a cowards' holiday. Twice that day I applauded and yelled myself hoarse with delight: once was when a dart thrower missed his spring as he tried to vault over the barrier, and the bull, catching him on its blunted horns, tossed him high; I was sorry he fell on the safe side of the barrier, I should have loved

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to have seen him come down on the bull's side of the arena, loved to have seen him gored and trampled into shapelessness, the damned craven, sneaking harlequin. Let me tell you about that. The human beasts in blue and gold finery, and their brethren in red and gold, had strutted and postured and hurled their balanced darts into the bull, and had run like jackals when *el toro* charged them, whilst the blind, lusting mob, cruel as wolves and not half as game, had clapped their hands and waved their scented handkerchiefs and *jeered the bull*, the only gentleman in the ring, a gallant fellow, putting up a fight against odds. Then a number of buffoons had entered the arena on horseback. Horses—did I write horses? These poor things had been horses once, but had been worked in carts or in other drudgery, and half starved until little was left of them but the shape of horses; poor old broken-kneed, broken-winded, sore-shouldered slaves of man, tricked out with gay ribbons, and *blindfolded*, that they might carry as sorry a lot of cowards as ever came from the wombs of women, on a gala day. The men in the saddles—if such vermin can be styled men—had *their* precious legs encased in steel under their

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riding trousers, in order that *they*, the most despicable things on God's earth, might not be injured when the bull charged. These ruffians had long lances, and they wore spurs with rowels as big as silver dollars, and each rowel was spiked—I hope that devils will ride those men (?) around and over the hobs of hell with just such spurs on, and may I be looking over the edge in an ice mask to watch the show—there will be no lack of applause if I am. The poor horses did not know what to make of it, but blindfolded as they were, they tried to raise a canter when the big spurs gored their flanks in merciless fashion ; it was enough to make a true man's heart turn sick to watch the punishment the used-up knackers got. But worse was to follow. One of the monkey men in dandy livery when chased by the bull, deliberately ran and stood by one of the blindfolded horses ; he was able to do this because the other man monkey in the saddle pulled the poor horse up on purpose to let him do so. The infuriated bull charged ; the man on the ground stepped swiftly on one side, and the bull's blunted horns were driven with tremendous force against the horse's ribs, knocking the poor beast up against the barrier. The cur in

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the saddle swung his leg free of the stirrup, and was ready to throw his own cowardly carcase over the barrier if the horse fell. The bull drew back and charged again and again ; the poor horse turned its long skinny neck and its blindfolded eyes in the bull's direction, and each time the blunt horns were driven against its body, the horse screamed in agony and terror, and the foul mob in that glorious enclosure cheered and laughed and made merry. I would have given ten years of my life to have been let loose on that currish crowd with a few grim men of Anzac, rifle and bayonet in hand. Horse after horse got this treatment, until the human beasts in the arena were sated, and then the prime actor, the buffoon with the sword, came on the scene. The bull had been run nearly off his legs, and any experienced cattle man would have faced him without a weapon and laughed at the danger (?) ; but when the bowing, smirking thing with the sword came on the scene with a strip of scarlet cloth in his left hand, he received an ovation from the crowd that could not have been surpassed if the swordsman had been a mighty general returning crowned with laurels. He began to play tricks with the leg-weary bull, insulting something gamer than

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himself, and every time he turned and bowed, the crowd applauded frantically, especially the wealthy, high-toned ladies in the best seats, who had shawls of wonderful colours hanging over the rail in front of them. Once the swordsman's foot slipped as he wheeled to avoid the bull's rush, and *el toro* caught him nicely with one horn in his posterior part, and turned him a nice handspring. I wished with all my soul that the bull's horn had not been blunted, I should have joyed to see *el toro* trotting round the arena with that buffoon on the end of his horn. Men with darts and coloured flags dashed forward from all parts of the ring, and lured the poor silly animal away from the sprawling man on the ground, and so the sickening show went on until evening—and *that* is what they call sport in Uruguay. It was as mean a show as ever I witnessed, and sleek, fat-paunched missionaries from New York walked about prating of the love of God, and made no protest. I should have liked to have got the dying testimony of one of those ruptured horses concerning the love of God. If they wanted a square trial of nerve and agility, and had put a fresh, strong, swift bull with sharp horns into the ring against *one* man only, and he

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armed with a sword and a strip of scarlet cloth, I should not object ; I know I should go and see it, for it would be a level match, and I think a man would be killed as often as a bull. I would wager a limb none of the curs I saw in the arena would be candidates for the job of bull fighter.

I wrote an account of this sickening spectacle at the time, and Don Juan Mulhall was the editor who had the pluck to publish it. There was a lot of *talk* about calling me out for writing it, but though I sent my seconds to two of the braggarts, it came to nothing.

They have another pastime at the capital of Uruguay—gambling. It is hoped that in time this rather shabby city may become the Monte Carlo of the Southern hemisphere. Being a searcher after sensations, I tried my luck at the tables, but dropped my money with such monotonous regularity day after day that, having no frenzied desire to work my passage home, I cut the gambling out. Working a passage was no novelty ; I had been compelled by circumstances to do it too often. I have met men who have sworn they did that sort of thing for the sake of experience, or for their health ; they can have my share in the future.

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I never worked a passage except when I could not raise the price of a ticket. Health is a fine thing, but I can keep mine in repair without scrubbing decks or polishing brass work. Yet I would do it again if there was a place I had the itch to see and could not raise the price of the tariff. Of all means of locomotion, working a passage on a cattle ship is about the least desirable; the cattle have a tough time, but it is princely compared to the existence of the 'casual' who ships as a 'help' for the sake of the ride, especially if the cattle boss is tough, and he mostly is. You meet nature's gentlemen in disguise as cattle bosses—in novels; those I have met disguised the fact so well that you never got a glimpse of it until you laid the 'boss' out with a feeding bucket, and then searched for it with your boots on any and every part of his anatomy. I've heard lots about chivalry and gentleness towards the 'under dog'—in books, but have met precious few samples in the rough-hewn paths of life; in the Southern Republics it does not grow on bushes to any great extent. Should you go that way, young man, in search of the evasive dollar in the capacity of a manual worker, keep your mouth shut, and for

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purely missionary purposes, keep two feet six inches of lead pipe down your trouser leg. It is a bad thing to get into gaol in any country, but don't do it in any part of South America; you are apt to get mislaid and forgotten. If you are 'in' for six months for a minor offence, and some one else who is 'in' for ten years has money enough, he will probably bribe the officials to change his name, cell and sentence for yours, and unless you have some good friend outside who will find you the money to do a little bribing on your own account, you will serve that ten years, though under a name your own mother would not know you by. If by accident or through thirst you come in hostile contact with a vigilante, the very best thing to do under all circumstances is to soften his palm with 'pesos,' which, being interpreted, means money. Do not bid too high, or he may think you worth holding and bleeding. Do not bid too low, or he will consider you a common fellow of the baser sort, and hold you in the hope of bleeding the other fellow. Strike the happy medium according to the nature of the charge—true or false—and the vigilante will treat you as a true caballero, and make the rough way smooth—for

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your departure. Dearly beloved, I know. I've had some. Always be diplomatic with the minions of the law; you may beat the individual, but you cannot beat the machine. If all the arts of diplomacy fail, and the street is dimly lighted, and your nerve good, a short sharp jar on the point of the chin at the proper angle is not to be despised, but on no account go 'inside.' You may argue that they cannot keep you there, that there are Ministers plenipotentiary and consuls, and so forth. Do not be a congenital idiot; folks of that ilk are not out there for such useful purposes as protecting the liberties of subjects of whatever country they represent; they are there to mingle with the gilt-edged crowd and fill in the scenery. I never cease to remember the superlative wisdom of a Chinese servant I once had out South. I had asked him for information concerning all kinds of institutions, and finished up by saying, 'Ah Sin, what are the gaols like?' 'Welly good places—to keep out of,' replied the pagan, who, amongst other things, had been an opium smuggler, and knew.

Possibly one of the most interesting portions of South America is the State of Rio Negro. To get

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to its miserable little capital, one has to go so far inland that very few Europeans ever visit it on business ; the man who would go there for pleasure would go to hell for ice creams. As a country to look at, it is about as interesting as a sand heap after sunset, but as a place in which to grow fruit, wine, flowers or vegetables, I think Rio Negro State could give any other part of the world a long start and a beating. I do not know why, but fancy there must be some peculiar quality in the soil. The size, quality and flavour of almost all kinds of fruit grown there are incredible, until you have been and seen and tasted for yourself. Land in what is known as the Great Rio Negro Valley is already worth a lot of money, and some day when there is rapid rail communication with the coast, and steamship communication direct to London and the great European ports, you will only be able to purchase Rio Negro Valley land in terms of diamonds, for not only is the fruit so perfect in size, flavour and appearance, but it comes to perfection at a period of the year when good European fruit is unobtainable.

I reached Rio Negro by crossing the giant Southern pampas of Argentina in the saddle, my

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companion being my youngest son Eric, three or four good hunting dogs and a couple of excellent rifles; a rifle should always be looked upon as a companion when travelling almost alone in those regions. We had plenty of sport, the laddie and I, on our three months' trip through that god-forsaken-looking wilderness of monotonously level pampa covered from end to end with dismal brown thorn bushes. We got no end of black-and-grey pampa foxes, which look something like a cross between the Alpine and the English fox. Of guanaco we got more than we wanted: this animal is a full cousin to the llama of the Andes, only it is short-haired; a buck will weigh about as much as a good-sized donkey; when on the move it can travel at a fine pace, and can leap like a stag; of all the big game I have lifted rifle to, I know of nothing that can carry away more lead than a guanaco, you have to put a bullet through heart or brain if you hope to drop it in its tracks. We also got quite a number of wild ostriches similar in every particular to the ostrich of South Africa, only smaller. Should you be in the company of any of the far-roving vaqueros, who are nearly all Indian with here and there a Spanish, Italian or

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negro strain of blood, and you want anything in particular, all you have to do is to shoot a wild ostrich and cut away the big juicy steak to be found running midway from the back to the point of the tail, and the vaquero will beg, borrow or steal what you want in return for the steak, which looks not unlike a gigantic porterhouse steak obtainable in the old days in the quaint steak-and-grill houses in London; it makes rare good eating, but I could never quite understand the vaqueros' frenzy for it; my boy and I thought a good deal more of the cock feathers our rifles won. I say 'our,' but truth to tell, the youngster beat me hollow at the birds; he seemed to have an uncanny instinct for measuring the stride of an ostrich when shooting. Whilst I am writing of shooting, let me say that I know of no animal a quarter as hard to shoot on the move as the kangaroo: the undulating bound and the drab colour and peculiar shape of the great Australian marsupial make it a most difficult target—at least I have found it so. Tiger-cats, and what the vaqueros call the stump-tailed lion, we also got not a few of, and a good many of their pelts still adorn my study. The wild tribes of Indians who used

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to roam these pampas are now pretty nearly extinct ; the youngster and I camped for a time near some of their ancient burying-grounds, and dug up arrow heads and other trophies ; we also dug up some trouble for ourselves, which need not be specified here, except to say that Indians do not like their ancient grave-yards meddled with, any more than other people, and have ways of their own of expressing their disapprobation for which I do not blame them in the least, but they are so few now that they hardly count in the scale of things. Still, I have a suspicion that an Indian may be a cattle vaquero in the daytime, and an original red man by night. The law as it is understood in cities does not exist on the pampas ; no warrant will run there, unless backed by an armed posse of police. I had some exciting times out there, but for that matter, so does pretty nearly every one who goes to the pampas ; most folk who go that way do so because they have been making things too exciting for other people in more civilized communities, and retire to the wilds to hide their blushes.

Some day in the far-away future a genius will arise who will find some means to convey or

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obtain water to irrigate the Southern pampas, and then it will be one of the gardens of the world ; Artesian boring may do the trick—I rather fancy it will.

Crossing those desolate, sun-scorched regions, I went over the Rio Negro River, a fine stretch of water, deep enough in places to carry a fair-sized steamboat. Before I crossed into Rio Negro I had rather an exciting time in a dirty little town where the streets are made (?) wholly of sand, a town where it was considered bad form to have a bath, except at Christmas, and only then if you were thinking of getting married or buried. There were no extradition laws in force in Rio Negro, and outcasts from many lands drifted, or were driven there, but often crossed the river to do business—anything was termed business from looting sheep and cattle to sticking up a traveller. I had to sleep in a room with three other men, and from what I saw and heard I made a guess that they were cattle rustlers ; two of them were rather good class looking fellows, the other was all brute and few brains, just a ‘killer.’ I had not lost any cattle thieves that I was aware of, nor any cattle either, and had learned long ere that period that

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the art of minding one's own business is an art not to be despised. A little later I learned for a certainty that my three room mates were what I had suspected them to be, and had just brought off one of the biggest cattle raids ever run in that country with the aid of a number of skilled vaqueros. People who dwell eternally within the shadow of the law may fancy it was my duty to inform the authorities of my suspicions; had I done so, I should have had nothing of a tangible nature to go on, and most probably my boy and I would have been shot on our way back; anyway, the rôle of informer never appealed to me.

A little later I had another experience, which had its amusing side: a very energetic and enterprising gentleman named Price, who hailed from North America, had set up in business (?) in those parts some nine years before my advent; he was a sardonically humorous sort of a devil, this Mr. Price, and styled himself a commission agent, and collected his commissions with a gun. In the fulness of time the law collected him in the same primitive fashion. All the material for a first-rate sensational novel hangs around this gentleman's meteoric career. He was middle-aged, tall,

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handsome, reckless and debonair, and quite free from nervous depression under any circumstances. He could ride anything with hair on it, and shoot in his sleep—if he ever really did sleep, a fact which all the wayback police strongly doubted. He had a wife much younger than himself, good looking enough to keep any ordinary mortal awake, a woman with a head of bronze hair that would have driven an old-time Venetian artist crazy. The police said she could ride and shoot better than her husband, and as they sampled both for years they ought to know. Price's gang were all North Americans, for the simple reason that he would have none other in his band of outlaws. The first-lieutenant was a man who in make, shape and facial appearance might well have been my own twin brother, a fact which brought about an amusing episode later on. The gang had 'stuck up' banks galore, and even held up and cleared out towns of considerable size in the hinterland; they had rustled cattle, horses and sheep all over the country, and had 'held up' many ranches; when hard pressed, they never refused a fight, and their Winchesters were deadly. Just before I crossed the river from one territory to the other,

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these gentry had made one of their characteristically lightning-like raids, and had got away, but a German had been captured and held as part of the gang. I am not over-partial to Germans, but am as sure as a man can be of anything that that Teuton was as innocent as a dove; in the first place, he could not ride well enough to have sat a rocking horse in a nursery—an outlaw who could not ride would have been no good to Price. I arrived with all the evidences of my hunting trip upon me, a well-worn Winchester slung on my saddle, and was arrested as Price's lieutenant. When I laughed and asked what they thought that notable outlaw would be doing there so soon after the raid by the gang, I was told that I had come back to try and save the German prisoner. Then I was confronted with the description of the gang's lieutenant, and it made me gasp; I could not have described myself better if I had been paid to do it. It was just one of those cases of a man running into his own double, and, by the way, I believe that nearly every man born into the world has a 'double' somewhere. I soon cleared myself, however, and every one in authority treated me like a prince, except one coloured sergeant of police, who to the

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end₂ swore I *was* the wanted man, and I fancy he thinks to this day that I was, and that I had bribed my way out of a tight corner ; this would naturally have hurt his official sense of justice, seeing he got no bribe, though he got some language when I found him following me like a shadow.

I have no space at my command to write of Bolivia, the ' mystery ' state of the Southern world. Some day it is my belief that deposits of mineral ore of amazing richness will be found amid the weird hills that are as many-hued as flowers in a tropic garden. I shall never forget the hills of Bolivia. Where all else is colourless and sombre, where the flora and fauna make you think you have struck a topsy-turvy land, the hills look as if giant artists had painted their barren slopes and rude uncouth crests ; some of them have almost as many colours between crest and base as you will find in the plumage of an Australian parrot ; it gives the world a quaint and grotesque appearance ; the colouring must be due to mineral deposits in the soil, and I think it quite probable that some new mineral will yet be discovered there, possibly distributed in a form new to miners ; some wide-awake analytical chemist may get at the secrets

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of the hills of Bolivia ; as for me, I am unfortunately no analyst. Roaming in the unspeakably dreary ravines, one is eternally bumping into patches of cactus plants, probably the ugliest and most misshapen plant that grows when not in flower, but when you come across a cluster of cactus blooms, you stand and wonder who told you rainbows or summer sunsets were gorgeous. Like pretty nearly everything else in Bolivia, the cactus is a freak ; matchless beauty which often lasts only a few hours is surrounded by spiked hideousness. The reptilia are the same ; pretty nearly everything from spiders to birds and from birds to beasts is on the abnormal pattern ; it is like a country that gnomes had made and then tried to destroy. Yet I think it will play a big part in the world some day, when the right man probes into its mysteries and finds the key.

I should have liked to have written a good deal concerning the Andes, those towering peaks that sunder state from state, and at times almost seem to link earth and sky together, but it would need a book to do justice to such a theme. I have marched and fought in the Perrin mountains, have wandered through the great Altai chain, have

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climbed the Italian Alps, and have made pleasure trips through many others, but the unforgettable grandeur of the Andes will abide with me for ever. Silent, inscrutable, almost naked of human inhabitants, except where some resolute gold prospector plies his calling, or where the native-bred packers cross the great divide with trains of llamas, they are a majestic mystery. A railway runs across their breadth where Chili and Argentina front each other, an amazing piece of engineering work, but to right and left of that crossing there is solitude wrapped in snow. Not many mines of value have been discovered amid the vast wilderness of rock, and yet my prospecting instinct tells me that some day the silent wardens of the wilds will yield up their secret to the right man, or men, and then those gaunt giants lifting their dripping heads, hoary with the passage of the ages, will ring and reverberate to the sound of the feet of multitudes of treasure seekers forcing their way inland, in spite of cold, exposure, hurricanes or avalanches, like an army marching to battle. One day I was talking to an English mining engineer as he was pottering about the foothills, and he said : ' I don't believe there is payable metal in the Andes ; they've

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been prospected,' and I laughed in his face. Prospected? The Andes prospected? Yes, about as much as the leaves on the trees in the impenetrable forests of the far north of Argentina have been counted.

Talking of the far north of Argentina, *there* is a country that could carry millions of good white settlers and then scarce be disturbed. There is the land of forest and river, of open glades and dense jungle, there where you can shoot the black and the striped jaguar, providing they do not get in their work first on you, there where the soil is so rich that sugar-cane grows so high that sitting in the saddle I have been unable to reach the topmost fibre, a land where maize will flourish if you only scatter the seed, a land that ought easily to carry in comfort the surplus populations of Italy and Spain, a goodly land, a gracious smiling land, with millions upon millions of acres covered with forests that only grow up, rot and make the rich earth richer. If there were only such a thing as a democracy of the world, here is idle land waiting for Europe's landless brood, a garden for the gods. In those dense forests are great tribes of red men, descendants of those red men who escaped the



A. G. Hales with gang of Red-shins as prospecting party, South America.

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slaughtering hands of the old buccaneers ; in those jungles lie hidden by dense undergrowth forgotten cities ; I have at times blundered upon places where the ancient Indians used a system of irrigation which our modern engineers would have no room to despise, though now nothing moves there but the jaguar and the serpent. There is gold in the rivers ; I have washed a dish of ' dirt ' here and there and found the ' colours,' but gold has always been the curse of that part of the earth ; it caused too much innocent blood to run ; the soil is good enough without the yellow metal, it will grow anything, and the rarest thing to find is a man, and yet Europe is crowded. Is all the Western world mad ? The Indians have had such a terrible time at the hands of the white men in days gone by, that I do not think as long as they exist and memory lasts, they will trust men of our colour, nor can any man who knows the facts blame them. I had fixed up a prospecting party, consisting solely of myself and a dozen red men, to go in search of a spot I had heard of far back beyond the great cedar forests. The outfit was ready, when the news came in to the little settlement that one of those ghastly tragedies not infrequent in the

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dim recesses of the forests had occurred. A prospector returning from a long trip inland with his gold, had tried to cheat his red men out of their reward for faithful service rendered ; a quarrel had ensued ; the white men being the only members of the party armed with firearms had abused their power, and blood had been spilt ; the red men fled into the denser timber, but circling round had ambushed the whites and cut them to pieces with their terrible machettes. The night that news reached the settlement, my Indians fled, fearing reprisals, though had they known it, they or their kind had nothing to fear from me, for my sympathies were and are with the red men. The very morning of the day the news came in, I had had a portrait taken of my party and myself ; they may not have been an over-pleasant looking crowd, but I think they would have been all right. I could never get them together again, and had to give up my intention of looking for that yellow dust.

CHAPTER XV

LIFE ON A GOLDFIELD

LIFE on a goldfield is of all lives the most exciting. I have an idea that these remarks from an old experienced prospector like myself may prove not only interesting but useful, as it is my firm conviction that as soon as the peace comes another big gold rush will take place in Australia and many thousands are sure to flock to it, for the lust of adventure is not dead in the race. I think a big gold hunt will take place in the Northern Territory of South Australia, my native State. This is an unexplored region, full of tremendous possibilities.

When I was quite a boy, the South Australian Government built a telegraph line from Adelaide to Port Darwin ; this they did with Chinese labour. Two relations of mine were employed upon that work : one was killed by the blacks ; the other, after a few years, returned home. He was a

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shrewd man and an observer ; he talked right up to the time of his death to me concerning the possibilities of the Northern Territory as a gold-producing centre, and constantly urged me to go there in search of yellow metal. I have always intended to do so, but something prevented me from putting the desire into execution, and I never got much further inland than Alice Springs—some day I shall.

Not long before the war the South Australian Government sent a parliamentary party into the country to spy out the land. Of course they could not do much beyond following the old trails, and the great tract of country lies in its unfathomed mystery, ready to-day for the courage of the exploring pioneer ; and he who goes to blaze the new trails will need to be no chicken-hearted fellow either, but his reward will be great, if his luck holds good, for the metal is there. Every cattle man who has been far north knows it, for the natives have specimens to show, and where the 'sheddings' are, the reefs must be.

A gold rush will set in before long ; and when the gold has petered out, the prospectors will settle down as farmers and fruit-growers, and towns will

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spring up where to-day there is only the wilderness.

It is a great country and will grow anything ; tobacco grows wild there, so does a specie of cotton—stuff so fine in its wild state that it is more like silk than cotton, and some day, when cultivated, it will be known as Australian silk. The Asiatics know all about this product, and that is one of their chief reasons for coveting the land. Tea, sugar, rice, maize, tobacco, wheat and wool will all flourish there, and as a centre for the growth of the mulberry tree for silk production it is superior either to China or Italy. I say this knowing all three countries, and there are not many kinds of fruit that will refuse to come to perfection in the rich sub-tropic soil. I know South America fairly well, having spent nearly four years there during a couple of trips I made, and I know how rich the Republics are in the matter of soil and climate ; but the Northern Territory is equal if not superior, the soil is as good, the climate better, and the law of possession infinitely superior—in fact, I think the laws of South Australia which run in the Northern Territory are the purest and fairest laws in the whole world. Women have helped to make

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them for a long time past, and women's influence in politics has made for honesty and moderation. Many English people say the English women under thirty are not fit to have a vote—that is no affair of mine, I am only an exile ; but I know that Australian women are fit—they have proved it.

Gold-mining, or rather gold prospecting, is hard work ; it needs pluck, and above all it requires the spirit that will never admit defeat. A man without stubbornness is no good for this game ; he must have a certain amount of imagination also, and he must be an optimist. When the sun goes down upon a day of failure, he must feel in his bones that to-morrow will surely bring him luck. He must like adventure for adventure's sake. He needs a good constitution, and must be able to live on hard food—there are no luxuries to be had where he must go. He may be a fool in cities, yet be very, very wise in the bush. I often laugh when I read in English papers and books that the Australian aborigine is the lowest creature in the scale of intelligence in the world. The wild black man of the bush has more brains in his finger-tips than the English farm labourer or hedger and ditcher has in his head. At his own business he is the cleverest and most astute

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creature that draws the breath of life. He knows all that the birds and the beasts know, and knows it better than they do. He can travel as the crow travels, without chart or compass. He can track a lizard over ground as hard as a London pavement. Englishmen call him a fool because he is wonder-smitten when he sees a railway train for the first time ; can those same white men make a boomerang and cast it so that it will describe a circle and come back to their hands ? The men who go to prospect in way-back regions come in contact with the natives ; my advice, and it is advice founded on experience, is, 'seldom trust a native.' The African negro is faithful to his friends—the Australian black seldom is, in his wild or half-wild state. I had one on Coolgardie goldfield in its early days. I treated him well, and he told me he knew where a great reef lay that was alive with gold. I formed a party and went past Kalgoorlie, on past Kurnalpi, away beyond Peaks Find into the waterless regions beyond, and all the time the black said, 'Keep going, boss, we find it soon.' Then the water began to give out in our saddle-bags and death from thirst was staring us in the face. My men said, 'Give in and turn back.' I clung on

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stubbornly. The black deserted us in the night, taking my best riding horse and the biggest water-bag, and we had to battle back as best we could. I knew when we started on the back trail that we could never live long enough to get back to water, if I took the trail we had made, so cut across country, trusting to fortune and my instincts. Fortune was kind, for I picked up a prospector's tracks and hit his camp, but by the time I had arrived there I had two young prospectors strapped to their saddles, jibbering of running rivers and falling rain. They were only lads and had felt the strain more than I had ; their lips were swollen and cracked ; their tongues like sun-dried leather, and their eyes glaring with semi-insanity. I heard them pray and heard them curse ; when they were not cursing the sun and the flies, they were cursing me, and I knew deep down in my heart that if I did not get them into safety, I could not go back myself. In the bush a leader must be a real leader—there is no excuse for the man who fails.

I got them back and they both forsook prospecting for all time. One of them became a successful merchant ; the other is, I think, dead. I tried, some years after that venture, to get the man who

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is now believed to be dead, to go far inland with me again. He was very hard up. He poked me in the chest with an extended forefinger: 'Me!' he said, 'me go into that cursed bush again—not for all the gold that was melted in Sheol!'—only he didn't say 'Sheol.' Then his eyes took on a retrospective gaze. 'Do you remember the sun that last day, boss, when we were lost on the big plain, with nothing under foot but bits of white quartz that seemed to dance about in the heat? Do you remember the flies when we passed through the Mia-Mia scrub; how the devils got into the cracks in our lips and in the corners of our eyes, and you had our hands tied so that we couldn't get off the saddle and run away into the bush and perish? You may have forgotten, boss, but I haven't. My wife's been goin' to divorce me a thousand times because I hit her in my sleep and rouse the house yelling "flies! flies!"'

Then he told me he would never go off the beaten trail again for a hansom cab full of diamonds, with a ruby tiara thrown in—and he was no weakling, but a good game chap, only he had, as he phrased it in his quaint vernacular, 'had some'; and it's when you've 'had some,' that you know.

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The Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie, Kurnalpi, White Feather and Boulder group of fields was about the richest thing in gold that I have seen. It is in the hinterland of West Australia—then a God-forsaken, barren wilderness; now, thanks to the genius of Engineer O'Connor, a fertile land, for irrigation has done marvels. Sir John Forrest and Engineer O'Connor brought forth a scheme to convey water in pipes over hundreds of miles of barren country, I had a newspaper on the fields at the time, and opposed the scheme tooth and nail. I thought Forrest and O'Connor were mad; the sequel proved they were the wise men. It was one of the fine engineering feats of modern times, and will remain a monument to the genius of its sponsors, long after we—who opposed it—are forgotten and I hope forgiven.

I tramped up to Coolgardie field, as thousands of others did, and had just two shillings in my pocket when I landed in that Eldorado of the West. I was in London when the news of the gold strike reached me and went homewards like a homing bird. Money was not very plentiful, and, in order to increase my store, I went in with a man who owned a couple of race-horses and had a plunge on a

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hurdle race. I never did like seeing my money in the air, but this time the odds were long, the horse was good, the owner honest and the jockey clever and capable. But we were not the only folks out for the plunder that day, and we were squarely beaten ; that necessitated a steerage passage from Adelaide to the West, and a long, long tramp. If my horse had won the hurdle race I would have gone over first class and ridden a decent hack up to the new gold rush and had a pack-horse to carry my food and blankets. As fate decreed otherwise, I had to foot it all the way and carry my food and blankets on my back. Did I like it ? You can wager your braces I did not, for I love the saddle, and no horseman cares to tramp ; but it was a case of walk or stay away. Fellows died, like flies, from dysentery, fever, and general hard times in the early days of that rush, and their relatives never knew what became of them ; some got rich with magical quickness.

I was at work on Fly Flat, digging for alluvial gold, the day after my arrival ; I did moderately well and began at once to speculate, putting my money behind prospectors and sharing their good or evil fortunes. Then I took a job as mining

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reporter for the *Coolgardie Miner*, owned by William Clare ; but the passion for prospecting was always on me, and though I liked Clare and found him an honest man, I threw up my job and went after the metal with varying success. Sometimes I was moderately rich ; sometimes so hard up that a meal was a luxury ; but no man, who was not a loafer, could starve on that field. I used to go and dig in Pig Gully, or on Fly Flat, all the early part of the day, and make a bit ; and dodge around, looking for chances of making a few pounds by speculation, in the evenings. I was never broke long, for I had muscle and brains. I found many small claims, but never had an interest in one of the great mines. Plenty of the very successful men offered me substantial backing, but somehow I liked being my own man. Henry Clay Callahan, Bob Gibson and many another money spinner whom I had known on other fields, offered to frank me ; but I had faith in myself and did far better than the average man.

Then I did a foolish thing—I started a newspaper and made money, but mining would have paid me better, because a newspaper takes a man into politics, and politics take him to the devil. I stood

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for parliament in the Coolgardie district, as the representative of labour. My opponent was Mr. A. E. Morgans, a Welshman, who represented capital. He beat me for the seat and became Premier of the State—a clever, good-hearted, able man. I am only writing the simple truth when I say that I am now sincerely glad that Coolgardie rejected me as its M.P. I have had a broader and a bigger life as a free-lance than I should ever have known as a politician; I have travelled far, learnt much, and if my country needs me in the future, all that I have learned is at the disposal of my home land; but I shall never push myself or my knowledge of life upon my people, for the glamour has gone out of public life for me. I think I lost all interest in personal fame the day I stood by my little comrade's grave in Buenos Aires; I had been so hungry to prove to her that there was good stuff in me, and when the shadows fell around her, the spring of ambition snapped; nothing now remains but a sense of duty; no man has a right to live for himself; if my country called me I would go into the arena, but not otherwise. I have an idea that I shall die as I have lived, a free-lance and a wanderer; then there

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will be that other great world beyond the veil to explore ; I pray the gods it will not be a lone trail. But there is work to be done here, as long as health and courage last, and the opening up of such an unknown place as the Northern Territory is a task fit for a strong man with big ideas. A big new colony will be founded there, for some day it is going to be the hub of the Australian wheel, some day it will be the jumping-off place for Europe ; it is the nearest point of contact. There is coal there somewhere ; I have collected samples from adventurous bushmen. There is oil in the earth, for I have handled the shale, and where the shale is the oil is not afar off, and the shale was akin to that I handled in Galicia. Prospecting parties will go in search of those things, and as a natural corollary they will open up much hitherto unknown land ; they will be the trail blazers, and the farmer and fruit grower will, as they always do, follow the blazed trails, and make the land blossom. There is copper and gold in the Northern Territory ; it will be prospected for, and the reefs and alluvial patches located ; then from all sides the crowds will pour in, for the lure of the metal never dies. My personal opinion is that the Australian Govern-

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ment should help all prospectors, and at the same time the Government should keep a certain right in every mine found, of whatever nature, so that the wealth won from Australian soil should go to the Australian people. In the past our mines have been ours in name only ; the wealth has been sucked from us as vampires suck blood from victims' veins. Australian wealth for those who live in Australia must be the policy of the future, if the country is to fulfil its noble destiny properly ; we have permitted ourselves to be sucked dry in the past ; we must, and we will, alter that as soon as this world war ends. Instead of being in debt to-day, Australia ought to possess the biggest gold and silver reserve of any of the nations ; she has played the milch cow too long. Let me point out what happens to those who do not become rich in a mining rush to such a country as the Northern Territory, and out of the thousands who risk the gamble, only a very few draw big prizes, the rest take up land and become fruit and wine growers or farmers ; the Government helps them as no government in all the world helps tillers of the soil, because it is our aim to settle people on the land, to give them something to work for, to toil

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and strive for, to make them a strong, independent, enduring breed. When a man puts his feet upon a piece of land and says 'This is mine,' he grows inches in mental and moral stature. Napoleon knew that when he framed the peasant holding laws of France, laws which made the French peasant what he is to-day. A man will work for his own, fight for it, die for it if need be, and that is the type we want to breed in the N.T., for in the future the N.T. must be the main military bulwark of Australia, as well as its main commercial outlet. In days to come Port Darwin will outrival Melbourne or Sydney—it must, on account of its geographical position. It may be argued that all who go gold seeking and fail will not be fitted for land cultivation. That is so, but towns and cities spring up in the wake of the pioneer, factories are born, all kinds of industries take root, both new and old, and work is found for all who are willing to work. There is one industry new to Australia which, if I live, will be introduced to the N.T. I refer to the silk industry. A day is coming when thousands of miles now covered by useless scrub will be carrying the wealth-producing mulberry tree. Ye gods, how the mulberry tree

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would flourish there, and the mulberry tree means silk factories and—national wealth. That ought not to be a private enterprise, it should be national ; the land belongs to the people in fact as well as in theory—now. I hope, I trust, I believe that the Australian people will be wise enough to utilize it, cover millions of acres of it with the wealth-producing silk tree, and put the wealth won into their own pockets. Are these things dreams ? Nay, not so. I saw Western Australia spring from a forlorn little colony into a great state under the magic of the prospectors' deeds. We went, we worked, we conquered. I say 'we,' for I was one of them. Many such changes have I seen in a nomadic life, and what *has* been can and will be ; but let no man or lass who thinks of trying it when the war drum has ceased to beat, fancy he or she is going on a picnic. The life is hard, rough, dangerous ; but as God lives, it's a man's life, the kind of life that bred the lads who battled their way up the frowning face of Gallipoli in the very teeth of death and covered themselves with fame eternal on the bloody fields of France and Flanders.

CHAPTER XVI

AT THE GREAT WAR

WHEN the war, which at the time of writing is still raging, broke loose to fill the world with sorrow, and sow the fairest fields in Europe with skulls, I wished to join up, but having a finger off each hand and being over forty-five, I was rejected. Finding that my services were declined, I determined to see as much as possible of the great struggle, in order that I might qualify for service later on, for I was not of the number who believed the war would be a short one. I knew Germany and German preparations too well for that. Not wishing to tie myself to any journal for a term, I went as a free-lance, for in the early days little notice was taken of war writers. Meeting an Australian squatter in London, who had horses to sell, I arranged with him to go to France at my own expense and try and sell his horses; and in that way I became a contractor, and as a contractor I crossed the Channel, my eldest son Walter, now fighting in Palestine as a private soldier in the New Zealand Mounted Infantry, going with me as private secretary. As a contractor I was a

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failure from the first, but being in the zone of operations, I wrote as often as opportunity served, and sent my copy to London under my signature. My agent placed a good deal of it with various British journals, but as a financial venture it was disastrous; only a man who has tried to work a war off his own bat can form any estimate of the difference between what you can earn and what you are compelled to spend. It seemed to me that I was burning money all the time, whilst very little came in in comparison with the outlay. But if I burnt up all my scanty savings, I was gleaning much experience. It was in the dark days when the British troops were making history between Mons and Compiègne; all mankind knows that story, it is one of the Homeric things of history, a thing that generations yet unborn will marvel at. Then came the fateful move of the German General von Kluck in turning away from Paris to the Marne, and the defeat of the enemy by the French and British armies. There are two ways of looking at the Marne movement of the German General: either he blundered in almost idiotic fashion in swinging off his original route which would have taken him right to Paris in a few hours,

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or else in the first place von Kluck had allowed himself to be trapped by the French high command, when the French armies fell back with the British. If it was strategy on the part of the French command planned to induce von Kluck to overreach himself, then it was a masterly manoeuvre and succeeded in every detail. I know that I was waiting and watching every hour to see German Uhlans riding along the Paris road. I returned to Paris, and saw the transporting of the army that so completely upset von Kluck's hopes on the Marne; possibly a stranger sight than that has never been witnessed by a war correspondent. Every kind of equipage was requisitioned, from motor-cars to cabs; fashionable carriages and hawkers' carts jostled each other, and all were packed with soldiers. Paris itself was in a tremendous state of alarm, for the German occupation of Paris in 1871 has left no loving memories in French minds. I had seen a good deal of the flight of the French peasantry from Northern France. But why write of that now? The horrors of those times have become commonplace since Germany has overrun so many countries; I saw similar sights in Belgium and Italy.

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The only piece of war work of any note that fell to me as apart from what every one else got, was the first air fight ever fought. I was lucky in witnessing this ; it was a sheer accident on my part, and I am not going to pretend that it was not. I was also lucky in regard to the publication of the same ; my son got smartly to Paris with the ' copy ' ; it went to my agent in London, and without a moment's delay was offered to the London *Evening News* ; that journal published it, and so I beat, if only by a few hours, the London morning papers which had it next day. It was a fluke, but it stands as a record : the very first air fight ever reported was written up by me and published by the *Evening News*.

The frightful price I had to pay for everything from a motor-car or saddle-hack for a day, was digging very deeply into my revenues, and life generally was getting very hard for the band of unattached war scribes, for the military hand was reaching out for us. If I got into a village where troops were, I was promptly ordered out of my billet as a non-combatant ; if I entered one when any troops were there, the order to get out was crisp and curt ; if I said I was hungry or wet through, or

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had no place to sleep in, I was informed that was my own fault, I had no business in the vicinity, and hungry and wet and weary, I would have to march, and march quickly. I make no complaint; I would do the same to any unattached scribe were I an officer. No correspondent *could* get round like that now; things have been reduced to a system; you could not even get into the country now without proper credentials; the day of the free-lance is over. I got hunted out of so many villages that I began to feel like a yellow dog that had mislaid its home, and my cash got lower and lower.

My boy and I returned to London, and raising a little more money, we went to Antwerp, which was then expected to fall every day. We got to a suburb of the city a few hours before it fell, and we were in the great stampede that followed. It was a very miserable time; the weather was wet and cold, and neither food nor shelter was obtainable. Just about this time we ran across Mr. George Austin, a well-known Press photographer, a veteran who knew how to take the rough with the smooth and smile; a very quiet, game, resolute man, who knew what he wanted, and mostly got it. It was pretty rough those days even for men

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who knew what roughing meant. I know how glad I was when I managed to squeeze into an open railway station and lie down on the platform in my wet clothes. I would have taken off my boots, for they were full of water, only I feared some one else might take a fancy to them whilst I slept, for there were many there bootless and shoeless. Many a time I thanked God for the friendly shelter of a farmhouse barn or even the lee of a hayrick in the open. I knew by this time I had made a mistake trying to score off my own bat, but no son of Anzac likes to quit or surrender. The three of us footed it into a little Belgian village, in the hope of getting some food; we were promptly arrested by a self-appointed villagers' committee, and taken to the local railway station and held as German spies. We produced our passports, and were told that every German spy had a British passport, and to make matters worse, a woman came forward and swore she had heard us talking to each other in Flemish, of which language not one of us knew a word. When we denied it, she became furious, and harangued a mob of peasant women that had collected, and as the informer branded us spies, they raged at us. I am very,

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very fond of women, but I did not want to fall into the hands of that mob ; they were simply crazy to kill some one, that was all. We had an exceedingly close call for our lives that day. We got free at last, thanks to the good offices of a French gentleman who came upon the scene, and being known to the peasants, he induced them to give us the benefit of the doubt, but his parting advice was : ‘ Get across the border into Holland, and get quickly.’ We took that advice, and hit out for the land of the Dutchman, and none of us were slow at swinging a leg. Knowing as I do what German spies did for the Belgian villagers, I do not bear any malice towards the latter for what they did and tried to do to me, but why will women make such unsportsmanlike grips at a male’s anatomy when they are on the warpath ?

Our next adventure came to us through butting in where possibly we should not have meddled. We came across a number of our sailors who were prisoners of war ; they had been in the ill-fated defence of Antwerp. We rescued a midshipman and two bluejackets, and got them safely across to England. My own part in that performance was not worth making a psalm about, but both

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Mr. George Austin and my boy ran some very grave risks of being shot; at the very best, we would all have got long terms in a military prison, had we blundered, but we were no novices, any of us, and I flatter myself I am as good a general as any 'squarehead' when it comes to planning and carrying out a plan. I never heard what became of the bluejackets after they landed in England, but the father of the midshipman wrote me saying he had written to Lord Northcliffe to thank him for the help one of his lordship's war correspondents named Hales had given his sailor son. The parent did not know that I was only a free-lance, and not in any way attached to Lord Northcliffe. What the master of Carmelite House thought about the matter, I never heard; possibly when he read the letter he shied it in the waste-paper basket, remarking, 'That damn chap Hales been butting in again.' I should like to add here, that I think the Government should give a decoration of some sort to the one-time photographer of the *Daily Mail*, Mr. George Austin, for the deed he did that day; he ran no small risk of being shot when he and my son rescued those fine British bluejackets.

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Once or twice after that I crossed again to Europe, but eventually money ran out, and I had borrowed all I could lay hands on, so finding myself in debt and my health not being good, I accepted a commission from Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton, and sat down to write *McGlusky's Great Adventure* and *Ginger and McGlusky*, which I followed up with *President McGlusky*, and so, having paid off my debts, and having a bit in hand, I decided to go to the Italian front ; I had a newspaper commission as well as my own funds this time. My boy had long since joined up as a trooper ; he had gone out to New Zealand and enlisted, because the authorities would not pass him in England, owing to malarial fever in his blood, but the N.Z. let him in all right. The last letter I received from him was typical of the lad : ' Don't worry, I'm O.K. Got the best lot of pals on earth, dad.'

I went to the Italian front, but as a journalistic venture it was a frost, for I had not been there three weeks when I received a letter from the Editor of the weekly journal I was representing, saying : ' The work you have sent is first class, but there is absolutely no interest here now in Italian affairs ; this, of course, is not your fault.

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Mark time until a big battle is fought.' Marking time was never a game of mine. I went to the mountains, where I knew General Peppino Garibaldi was about to commence one of the many small engagements with the enemy, and shook hands with the great-grandson of the famous Liberator of Italy. The General was standing by a battery in action, as fine a figure of a soldier as a lover of fighting men might wish to see, tall, graceful, full of athletic power, a man with a strong, clean-cut face and curt, quick manners. Before we had been talking many minutes he told me he also was Anzac bred, and was proud of the land of his birth. 'I came into the world in Melbourne,' said he with his quick laugh, 'but as I left Australia when eight months old, I haven't much of a call on that land of mighty fighters.' I spent the day with him, walking from point to point as he directed his men. He is a fighter after the Napoleonic school of generals, a rare school in these days; he goes into the thick of a fight, and stays with his men, for like the born leader he is, he believes in the power of personal magnetism. 'The proper place for a general is in the hottest corner of his fighting front,' is his maxim, and he lives up to it.

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When we had been moving about for some hours, he said : ' Tired, eh ? '

I laughed. ' Good as new, General.'

' Well, why aren't you fighting ? '

I told him.

' I'll give you a place in my brigade, if you can get the permission from Headquarters.'

We gripped hands on that, and I went off and put in my application, which not only he but his father and Senator Agnetti, Captain Pirelli and Captain Weilschott, all of Italy, backed in every possible manner, as did Captain Douglas Rooke and Major Wilkinson of the Coldstream Guards. All the military people were in my favour from the jump, but the application is, at the time of writing, still hung up in Rome.

Whilst I was bombarding the officials for a permit to be allowed to fight, I was not idle in other ways. I got out to the various brigades in the mountains, and made a study of the Italian positions, and of the enemy's positions as well. I also studied the method of war in vogue, and got a good idea of the calibre of the Italian troops as fighting material. And here let me say that if the gods only grant that I get my commission, I would

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ask for no better men to lead into action ; they are full of splendid dash and high courage, but they need leaders who possess the magnetism of command, leaders who will stay in the thick of things and bear hardships and dangers as the men have to bear them. A general who would always be under their eyes where they could see him and feel that he was in deed and in truth a brother in arms, could take those men over the Alps into Austria like a storm. I know that war has changed nowadays ; I think it has changed for the worse as far as leadership is concerned ; men need something more than the valour of mere regimental officers. Marlborough, Frederick the Great, Turenne, Stonewall Jackson, Lee, Napier, Havelock, Nogi of Japan, all went into the thick of the fighting, and seldom were they beaten. Napoleon also, before he became Emperor, took his stand where his troops could see him and feel his inspiring presence. The allied armies will go back to that principle before this war ends—if we are to win. Too much is done to-day by map and telephone ; one man at the rear of each army with his staff, could outline the general principles of action, but every division engaged should have its general right at

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its head, and it should be a point of honour with him to be in the hottest corner of all his front. We should lose many generals, but we should win many battles.

I put in five months on the Italian front, five months of bitter winter weather. I was seven thousand five hundred feet above the plains, and I was in the marshes around Venice. Often when returning to my billet I was numbed so that my limbs were practically lifeless, but the experience gained was well worth it.

I came away at last, because I had no more money to carry on; once again I had broken my little bank in the search after knowledge. I am now working to earn more to enable me to get back to Italy and into the battle line as a soldier, if possible. When I left the war zone, the state of the Piave River made it almost a certainty that nothing big would happen for a while, but long before this is in print big things will have happened. The Italian position seemed to me to be most precarious when I left, and it is my impression that America ought to have thrown in a dozen divisions to help Italy, seeing that Italy for years fought America's battles before America came in. Should

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Italy be beaten, America will long rue it, for then Austria will be free to join hands with Germany.¹

I made a host of friends when on the Italian front, and General Gossi did me the honour of 'decorating' me before I left. I owe the Italians a great deal, for they taught me much that may be useful in the days when I carry out the dream of my life; but most of all I have to thank Captain Pietro Pirelli of Milan, who was my guide and instructor over a great part of the war zone; brave almost to a fault, courteous with the fine courtesy of his splendid race, reserved, silent, a gentleman to the marrow, and one who made free with none nor permitted a freedom, he was one of the biggest brained men I met. I should like to say here in justice to myself, that during the interval between my free-lancing on the Western front and my visit to Italy, I made many applications for active service. I tried to join the Anzac forces, but was told I should have to go to Australia or New Zealand for that, as men could not be recruited in London.

¹ EDITOR'S NOTE.—Since this was written, the big Austrian offensive has been attempted and failed, owing greatly to a sudden flood in the Piave River, and American troops have arrived in Italy.

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In London I met Major Harry Edmonds of the Anzacs, who had won lots of fame as an artillery officer on the Western front ; him I had known from his childhood ; I begged him to recruit me as a private for his battery, he being about to return to the front. I have his letter in reply in front of me ; briefly he said : ‘ I have no power to recruit you, and if I had I would not take you as a private ; men like you are wanted as officers. I myself would follow you anywhere.’ That was only one of many nasty jolts I got given in a nice way. Here is another. When Bulgaria was hesitating in which scale to throw her weight, I wrote the vanished Lord Kitchener, asking him to permit me to go to the Balkans and raise the Macedonian mountaineers, as they had a blood feud with Turkey ; I pointed out that the Macedonian mountains practically cut off Bulgaria from Turkey and commanded the only railway that connected the two countries. I said : ‘ I want no recognition from the British Government if I fail, so that the country need not be implicated,’ and I enclosed the following letter which proved I was a member of the celebrated Commitja Council, the council that always fomented war between Macedonia and Turkey.

AT THE GREAT WAR

ВЪРХОВЕНЪ

Македоно-Одрински

КОМИТЕТЪ

Haut Comité

Macédo-Adrinopolitain.

Macedonian Head Committee.

No. 790

October 28, 1903.

Ст.Софѣя.—Sofia.

Most Highly Respected Sir,

Owing to the conditions, in which is placed Macedonia, the cause for freedom of the Macedono-Adrianopolitains has been ill represented before the eyes of the world. Deeply interested of our sad fate, you came to us, saw the truth, declared it with your pen, and became apostle of the righteousness. The good words you told for our aims—towards the liberty, and the noble defence, which you made for the righteous cause, will be a bright ray for the deliverance of our fatherland from an insupportable barbarous oppression.

But you become twice dearer to the Macedono-Adrianopolitains, *as you stood forth in their columns*

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and shoulder by shoulder with them you fought for their liberty. Your abnegation was an encouraging example for the champions, you have given an animating uphold to their soul and poured the bright hope, that their struggle will shine with the holy righteousness.

For this your self-sacrifice and love to the delivering cause, Macedono-Adrianopolitains, owe you profound gratitude, and in the name of the organization, in the name of the champions offer to you, dear comrade, the thankfulness of the suffering Macedonia.

President of the Commity

from the reserve of the Bulgarian Army.

Major-General (*signed*) Tzontcheff.

To A. G. Hales, Esq.

I have good reason to believe that Lord Kitchener wanted to let me go; a civilian—I won't say a statesman—however, vetoed it. Had I been permitted to go, and had I escaped the many German agents whom I knew to be in those parts, I am certain a big percentage of the old Commitja fighting men would have rallied to me; all I asked was a guarantee of arms for the men I raised. The result of a Macedonian rising would have been to

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throw Bulgaria into our arms, for the Bulgars would never have joined a Germano-Turkish alliance with the mountain men cutting them off from Turkey. Even as it was, with the Macedonians standing quiet, it took them many months to make up their minds to join Germany and Turkey, for the Turk they hate and the German they fear, and they have good cause to fear, for if Germany wins the war, Bulgaria will under one pretext or another be enrolled amongst the Germanic states at the point of the bayonet.

It may be argued that I did not stand well with the British Generals I had served with, else why these refusals of willing service? I *know* why, but did not write this book to ventilate a grievance; still an extract from a letter from the General I served with in Africa which I received a week after I arrived in Italy, does not read as if the real soldiers had any feeling against me.

‘Dear Mr. Hales. . . . I am very glad to see you are again on the warpath. . . . Should my name carry any weight . . . I am delighted to vouch for your ability and straightforwardness. . . . You always carried out your orders, however disagreeable, without a murmur, and I have never

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had cause to regret any confidence which necessarily was placed in your discretion. . . .’

I would gladly append this general’s name, but he hates publicity as he hates the devil. He wrote that fine soldierly letter to help me, and it did help, for when I got to Italy I found an old-time enemy had been sowing tares among the wheat. My General’s letter killed them. I was ‘officially attached’ to the Italian Army as a correspondent, never to the British Army in Italy, though I was never out of touch with the British warriors; in fact I was in much closer contact than any correspondent of any nation, and I was more than pleased when the officer who had supreme control over correspondents placed the following communication in my hands, saying, ‘You may like to keep this, it is a copy of a memo that has been sent from British Headquarters in Italy to the War Office in London.’ Here it is, and I think it will prove to any unbiased mind that I had proved myself a man to the satisfaction of the British fighters, though I was yet to feel the steel from beneath the cloak from another kind of Briton as I have had to feel it ever since the African campaign.

AT THE GREAT WAR

HEADQUARTERS, 14TH CORPS.

N.1, 7. WAR OFFICE.

Mr. A. G. Hales, the correspondent of *John Bull* in Italy, is shortly leaving for England.

Although he is not an accredited correspondent, so far as the British forces in Italy are concerned, he may return to this country whenever he wishes to do so.

Signed by the Brig-Gen. of the General Staff.

March 24, 1918.

ITALIAN DELEGATION,
EMPIRE HOUSE, KINGSWAY, W.C.2.

DEAR SIR,—I fully appreciate the noble reasons which prompt you to offer your services to fight for Italy, but regret I cannot be of much use to you in the matter as according to the Italian laws no foreigner can belong to the regular Army.

All I can suggest is, that, as I believe, some foreign Legions are being formed (Slavs, etc.) you might try to get incorporated into one of them, but for this I think you would have a much greater chance of success if you got yourself proposed by General Peppino Garibaldi whom you know.

Regretting not to be able to be of more practical help,

Believe me,

Yours truly,

A. G. Hales, *Esq.*

LIVIS BORGHESE.

CHAPTER XVII

NOVEL-WRITING

SINCE that far-away day when my dear old padre gave me my start in life I have written three and twenty novels. The first was styled in mockery, *The Wanderings of a Simple Child*. I did not dream then how really simple in the ways of the world I was ; in fact, I thought I was rather a smart fellow. I know now how little a man ever does know concerning the real problems of life. That first book did not bring me in a cent ; the publisher told me to take it out in glory. What thin stuff 'glory' really is, I did not realize in those early days. I am wise enough now to know it is the stuff that fools are fattened on.

My first book, published in London, was styled *Campaign Pictures*. Cassell & Co. gave that to the world ; it brought me in a few hundred pounds. Then the late J. A. Arrowsmith, of Bristol, commissioned me to write *Driscoll, King of Scouts*, and

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paid me £300 down and a royalty. It took me six weeks to write, and I usually worked from ten to fourteen hours a day. My method is to write everything out with a lead pencil and send it to be typed. In the matter of spelling, when working I think I can find more ways of spelling simple words than any other man alive, yet strangely enough when not working I can spell particularly well; hard words never trouble me, but simple words get me in a knot. My newspaper copy, which used to go direct to the printers without being typed, has been the cause of more than one serious revolt amongst compositors. One type-setter told me in bitterness of spirit that before he had to set my 'copy' he used to see rats, snakes and eight-legged rabbits when he had been drinking hard. After setting up my writing, he used to see *it* when he had delirium tremens, and said it scared him more than all the snakes that ever came out of a black bottle.

I know for a fact that in the old Sydney *Referee* office, when I was its athletic editor, the compositor piece-work demanded 'time and a half' for setting up my articles, and even then they did not fight for it. Once Charley Merchant, the

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famous Botany Handicap winner, who was proof-reader on the *Referee*, brought me a page of my copy and said :

‘ Look here, boss, is this a mining report, or poetry, or part of your account of the last prize-fight at Larry Foley’s ? We’ve got your three sets of copy mixed up, and we can’t tell which this page belongs to.’

I was angry, and he bet me a week’s wages I could not read it myself. Nat Gould, the celebrated sporting novelist, who then worked on our staff, was called in as judge, and I lost. I got Nat Gould to write out his judgment, and we submitted it to the compositors, and none of them could decipher it. The composing-room foreman said it was one of Nat’s tips for the races for the following Saturday ; another artisan declared it to be a paragraph for his serial story. No teetotalers were employed on the composing staff of the *Referee* whilst Nat Gould and I were writing for it. James Burke, the manager, said no sober man *could* set our stuff. Nat Gould is only known to fame in England as a novelist ; he was, however, the greatest ‘ tipster ’ ever known in Australia, and actually made a newspaper a great success by

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his marvellous gift for placing winners ; yet every time he and I went to the races on a betting excursion we usually came home bankrupt. He would not back his own judgment with his own money, though he was a wizard ; he would take a tip on the course from a knowing blade, and the result was that we always had to borrow the money to get home. You could prick him with a pin and find a winner three days before a race, but on the day he was as bad as I was, and I could break a bank.

My third novel was *McGlusky*, which had a big run and is going yet ; then came *Angel Jim*, a novel which had a remarkable reception by the Press. Not one solitary hostile review appeared in connection with *Angel Jim* ; yet I wrote that book in less than a month, and wrote it mainly to please my children, who, being very young, used to love to hear me tell yarns of my boyhood's days ; so to please them I 'created' Angel Jim and endowed him with my own youthful love of mischief. *Angel Jim* is in a measure autobiographical ; for as a boy I relished mischief for mischief's sake. In rapid succession came other novels. The *Viking Strain*, *Camp Fire Sketches*,

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Jair the Apostate, The Watcher on the Tower, Marozia, Little Blue Pigeon, McGlusky the Reformer, A Lindsay o' the Dale, McGlusky's Great Adventure, Ginger and McGlusky, President McGlusky, McGlusky in Italy, Where Angels Fear to Tread, etc. *The Viking Strain* I wrote in London, also *Jair the Apostate*. *Little Blue Pigeon* was written in Japan for the purpose of getting local colour; *Marozia* was jotted down at odd intervals in the Near East; a good deal of *The Watcher on the Tower* was written in Russia, where the scene is laid. *A Lindsay o' the Dale* was mapped out in Australia and put together in London. *McGlusky the Reformer* I wrote in Scotland and Wales. *Camp Fire Sketches* were what they purported to be—sketches written by bivouac fires, by the fires of cattle men and treasure seekers. *Where Angels Fear to Tread* was written in Italy in my billets during the war.

One London critic fell foul of my 'local colour' as portrayed in *A Lindsay o' the Dale*, that made me smile, for I had ridden or tramped over every inch of the Australian country I had written about, and the critic had never seen it. Later on I fell from grace and published a volume of poems. I don't know what made me do it; I guess it must

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c have been a sunstroke I got in the Gobi desert. Poetry is a disease, a form of madness. I have struck a lot of trouble in various ways in my quiet life, and poetry was the cause of a deal of it. A sunset gorgeous and glorious is lovely enough for a sane man ; a poet wants to go behind the lurid lines of clouds to see what lies beyond. He gets no satisfaction in the end, only fret and worry and tired feet. He hears the wind droning over Australian forests, where the dry bark whispers night and day in eerie undertones, and forthwith he wants to know what the wind is saying to the pines in some snow-clad glen in far-away Northern latitudes, and he goes forth to search and see. Some poets only travel in the soul sense ; they sit still and see visions. I was not built that way. Possibly my soul was in my feet ; God knows, I haven't found it yet ; but sit still and see visions and be content I could not. Yet when my volume of poems was published I knew I had missed every beautiful thing I had set forth to find in the world from childhood upward. Poetry got me into quite a lot of scrapes in other ways.

Once I wrote a poem to a beautiful young matron, couched in real Byronic language ; really I did not

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care a fig if she lived or died, but the moon was at its full and I had to write that poem or burst. I could have grown just as melancholy, just as idealistic over a cow feeding on clover in the gloaming, only a cow could not have read my poem. I made pretty free with the lady's anatomy, in verse I mean. I did not get quite as picturesque as the personal description in the Songs of Solomon. The next day when I called on her, she chased me over the back fence with the brass muzzle of a garden hose. I left ladies alone for a long time afterwards, and only wrote poems about dogs; but whilst sojourning in America fate threw me into the company of a deliciously lovely old maid of high lineage, who had remained unmarried in spite of her charms; she was as dainty as a piece of Sèvres china, and had nearly three million dollars in her own right. I was getting along fine with her and saw visions of transferring those three million dollars to my bank account by the simple process of changing her name to mine. She had loved a man in her sweet girlhood and he had jilted her, and her bent heart had never straightened out again. She told me with a trembling underlip that her life was

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blasted, and in an evil moment I went home and wrote a poem, a very touching and I consider a very lovely poem, and dedicated it to a 'blasted spinster' and sent it to her. She did not reply to my poem, but a whole regiment of her male relations did; they were Southern planters, and it was the season when the cotton is ripe for picking. They called on me in a bunch and each brought a few niggers with him. I saw them coming from my bedroom window, and the hotel proprietor, white of face, begged me to make a run for it, saying he'd had two men killed on his premises and he would lose his business if there was a third.

It was then that my long-buried talent for acting asserted itself. I remembered Hamlet, the mad Prince of Denmark. Divesting myself of my clothing, and sticking a rose behind my ear, I paced up and down my room, turning my head every now and again to talk to an imaginary spirit walking close behind me. The landlord gave one look at me and bolted, and I heard him explaining to the planters on the stairs that I was the maddest maniac he had ever set eyes on, and I think he believed it too. They came and peered at me in twos and threes,

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and their hard cruel faces sobered to pity as they heard me whispering insane sentences to 'My Lost Lenore.' Then I did a rather indecent hop, step and jump kind of dance, considering I was dressed only in a full-blown rose, and shrieked out some drivel about 'a blasted life, and a beautiful woman.' The sheriff lassoed me, and took me with kindly gentleness towards the County Asylum; I did not mind where he took me as long as it was away from those Southern fire-eaters. The landlord sent all my things on in a buckboard and did not even try to collect a month's board bill. He was madder than I was.

The sheriff was a sport,—I could read it in his face,—so when we got near the railway station I blurted out the whole story, and he nearly went mad with laughter.

'You go away and be a play actor,' he shouted; 'but, young feller, don't you ever come South again, for I'm going to tell this story and have the laugh on those planters as long as I live; but if you ever come this way again, bring your own coffin with you.' As the train steamed out, he ran to my window with a bit of final advice:

'Say, son, you quit writing poetry, or if you

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can't help it when it's full moon, you get some one who isn't plumb loco to sub-edit it, before you send it to ladies.'

I often write poems of an evening even yet, but I mostly burn them before breakfast.

CHAPTER XVIII

PLAY-WRITING

PLAYS are another form of insanity that gets hold of some folk. I have done more than a little of it. When you start to write a play, you start to borrow trouble. I have acted as 'literary ghost' often, when the exchequer was low. A literary ghost is a person who agrees to write a play or a book or an article for a wage, for some other person; he or she—for the ghost is not infrequently feminine—is bound in honour never to reveal the fact and expose the person who pays the wage and takes the kudos, providing the other party plays fair.

If the public only knew the real history of the authorship of some books and some plays, they would marvel, and there would be more than one broken idol in London. I wonder do the public really and truly believe that all the actor managers

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who attach their names as authors to certain dramatic works, ever wrote a line of those productions. I know that in many instances it is not so. There was a play which had a good run, of which I wrote nearly all, excepting the title, and for which I got little more than a mechanic's pay. I was glad to get it at the time.

There is a very well known writer in London who wrote a book for a celebrated person. I was a guest at his house for a portion of the time he was at work upon it, and know that the celebrity (?) did not do anything more than submit the mere notes from which the work was compiled. I could state within a few pounds how much the author got for his work, for quite inadvertently I overheard a conversation between the real writer and his wife, in which the sum was mentioned. The book made a sensation on account of its fine literary style.

'Literary ghost' work is far from uncommon, because writers as a class are an improvident gang; they seldom look forward to a rainy day and are at the mercy of those who need their brains. This is their own fault, and as they sow the wind they

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must eat the dust. One of the finest articles I ever wrote, a tribute to the men who fell at Gallipoli, was part of my ghost work. When an author writes the life of a celebrated athlete or actor, and the author's name is attached to the work, that is not 'ghosting.' I have done a good deal of that kind of work ; amongst other lives I wrote those of Charlie Mitchell, the champion pugilist of the world, and May Yohe, the one-time famous Vaudeville artiste. Charlie Mitchell was the best subject I ever handled. A man of remarkable intelligence and discernment, he told his life-story with amazing fluency. I was his guest for six weeks whilst compiling his life, and he often talked for seven and eight hours daily, and never once referred to a note ; his memory was prodigious. I first met him some four-and-twenty years ago, and he could talk of things that happened then as if they had occurred a week back ; even the minutest details had not escaped him.

It has been my fortune to interview, for professional purposes, generals, admirals, bishops, judges, statesmen, authors, artists, explorers, captains of industry, actors and adventurers, but I have seldom met a man of keener observation or more lucid judgment than Charlie Mitchell.

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He went through life with his eyes wide open and missed nothing. He was a terror in the ring in his youth, at fifty-one he was a most delightful host and an amazing raconteur. In the autumn of his days he had assimilated a dignity of bearing and a charm of manner that I have never met in any other sporting man. Wild as a hawk in his early days, he had much of the grand seigneur about him on the threshold of life's winter. With him it was a case of a really great man ruined by his youthful environment; and environment is, alas! only too often the mother of evil destiny.

Sport always fascinated me and I could write many books concerning the champions I have met in various parts of the world, but space forbids. I have watched men who were great, fight, run, wrestle, swim and ride, and have written so many descriptive articles that I should scarce know where to begin or leave off, if I touched my sporting experiences. I was with Holbein when he came within an ace of swimming the Channel. I have seen some of the greatest sculling matches of all time in Australia and England. I have looked on in Tokio whilst the wrestling championship of Japan was lost and won; have hunted buck,

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wolves, bears, guanaco, puma, kangaroo, emu, and ostriches, and have had some great and glorious days and nights, and still dream of some day bagging a royal tiger and a lion or two, or may be getting bagged. I do not think I should mind 'going out' that way; I'd sooner be worried to death by a lion than a lawyer. Perhaps at some distant date, when I am not feeling as young as I do at present, I will sit me down to write those hunting stories. Of all my writing—and there has been much of it—best I like to think of the war work in Macedonia, for I had a compliment paid me of which I am proud. Talking one day to some Russian prisoners in the hands of the Japanese during the last campaign, I discovered that one was a Bulgarian officer who had volunteered for service with the Muscovites; he remembered me and told me that the work I had done for the London Press during the big Macedonian rising against the Turks had been translated in the Bulgar tongue and issued as a text-book to the school children of Bulgaria by the then Minister for Education, and this made me proud.

We are vain fellows, we wielders of the pencil and the pen. My Bulgarian friend gave me another

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piece of information ; he said that Boris Tegueff, the Russian officer who acted as war correspondent and volunteer soldier in the big Macedonian struggle, had served in the Russian Army against the Japs and had been wounded and taken prisoner in a sortie from Port Arthur. I sought him in vain. Since then I have learned that Boris returned home, joined a revolutionary movement, and was sent to a Siberian prison for life ; poor, game, lovable, turbulent little devil, it was a sad ending for so gallant a fellow.

CHAPTER XIX

LIFE AS A LECTURER

IN between campaigning, book-writing and mining, I have sandwiched quite a lot of lecturing. When on the platform I like it, but the last ten minutes before I have to face an audience is always unadulterated purgatory for me, and I have never stepped upon a platform without wishing that a cyclone would happen along and take the whole show—except the pay-box—into outer darkness. Why a man should feel sick all over in front of a crowd who have paid to hear him, I do not know ; I only know that it is always that way with me. When I first lectured in San Francisco, I was very youthful ; my manager, who had spent a small fortune in advertising me as a pearl amongst orators, said :

‘I’m going on to look after the house ; mind you come along early and escape the crush ;

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nothing upsets a speaker like being jostled by a howling mob at the door.'

I did not go early, but I escaped the crush—I got in the back way, crossed the platform and peeped through the stage curtains and saw a seething mob in the big theatre; the mass of humanity consisted of four men and a woman. My manager came and explained that a reporter on a powerful evening journal had tried to blackmail him for a share of profits, and failing to get it, had spoilt the show by a two-column attack on the evening of the lecture. He went out to all the adjacent bars with an armful of tickets and whipped up a crowd, and I gave my lecture. At the close, the owner of the theatre demanded payment in full—we hadn't the money. He was a big man who had just retired from the prize-ring; he had no refinement, but he had the knoggiest and hardest pair of fists I had met up to that period.

The next day the printers and bill-posters came around in shoals, for we had billed that city till it looked like a museum to let. I never had so much exercise in all my life as I had that day. When I was not running up one street I was sprinting down another. In the evening, Jim Corbett's

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brother, who kept a cigar store at the corner of Kearney Steet, hid me in a coal cellar and smuggled me out of town by an early train.

One has some queer compliments paid one when lecturing. I had been addressing a big meeting in the States. Jack Dempsey, the celebrated middle-weight boxer, had advised me to go and make a little easy money in that direction. He had at first suggested that I should spar with him and then fill in the rest of the evening by lecturing on the noble art ; he said there was a fortune in it. But in the preliminary canter we got a bit hot, and forgot all about the lecture, and when the bout was over my mouth was in such a bad shape that when I tried to say ' Gladiator ' it sounded like ' Gin-and-water ' and plenty of it, so Dempsey and I cut the athletic lecture out and I talked on travel, and I told the folks how to go round the world and have a good time on a thousand dollars ; I hadn't discovered how to do it myself, but I could tell other people.

After the lecture, a man came to me and offered me a good job to go auctioning land in Florida. I told him I did not know a thing about Florida except that it grew sweet potatoes, alligators and

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snakes. Then he paid me what he thought a very high compliment :

‘ That’s all right, boss,’ he said. ‘ I’ve heard you talk, and a man who can lie about steamboats and freight trains as you did this evening can lie about land. I’ve four million acres of swamp, mostly under water all the year round ; but with your gifts and a little coaching from a real estate agent, you can make that land blossom like a rose—from the rostrum ! ’

He was chagrined when I refused ; I explained that I had to decline on conscientious scruples. And then he offered to take me on tour as a revivalist preacher, on a salary, or on a dividend from the collections ; he paying all expenses of travel and hotel bills. When I declined *that* offer, he offered to fight me with small gloves in public, and divide the gate money.

I have lectured in South Africa and South America, in Australia and England ; sometimes it brought in big money, sometimes none at all. I have lectured in churches, chapels, town halls, opera houses, theatres, tents, shearing sheds, and in the open air. There is a wonderful difference in audiences. With some I feel at home the moment

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I get face to face with them ; there are others who make me feel cold down the back the whole two hours I am on the platform. I have found this difference in temperament from St. James's, London, to a shearing shed. The best plan is to get a laugh, if you can, as quickly as possible, even if you have to get it at your own expense. If you can make a crowd laugh, you can make them cry ; if you can't do either of these things, make them swear—anything is better than letting them sit like wooden gods.

Australian audiences are rich in humour ; but there is nearly always some practical joker in an Australian audience, and it is wise to watch out for him, or her. In one town where I was lecturing on war, I got an awful knock. I had just finished telling a little personal episode, and had drawn breath for the applause I felt was due, when a solemn voice called out, with deadly distinctness : ' What a lie ! ' I grew hot in the collar, and a titter ran round the hall. I turned gravely in the direction of the voice and said something very sarcastic, then went on. For a time nothing happened ; I plunged into a bit of good descriptive work and was splashing the rocks

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with blood, when again the voice—higher and clearer this time—called : ‘ It’s a lie ! ’ I had had my audience thrilling, when the interruption came ; but all the thrill went out of them and they just wriggled in their seats and roared. Heaven has blessed me with a good temper, but I was as mad as a hornet and said things to my interrupter and to the audience for their bad taste in laughing over such a wanton insult. I was concluding by remarking, ‘ Ladies and gentlemen, whatever else I may be, I am a gentleman ’—and like a shot from a gun came the retort in a wild, thin shriek—‘ a lie, a lie ! ’ and the house went into convulsions. White with temper, I stepped from the platform and made my way through the grinning crowd towards the voice, and found an imp of a boy with a ripe watermelon grin all over his face, holding a big grey parrot between his knees. The feathered slanderer belonged to the publican next door, and every one knew the bird, for it hung all day and every day in the bar and those few words were its linguistic stock-in-trade. I looked at the boy and the bird, and memory conjured up another boy I had known who had broken up many a prayer meeting in his time, and I roared with the

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rest, then went back to the platform and had the time of my life. I did not lecture on war that evening,—no man could with all those dancing eyes and joyous faces in front of him,—I just told them stories, and the boy and that dem parrot did the rest ; for at the conclusion of each funny yarn, the kiddie gave the feathered devil a squeeze with his knees and it rounded off my story with a yell, ‘ A lie, a lie ! ’—and I must confess it was a truthful parrot.

The most terrible audience I ever faced was in the splendid Opera House, Pretoria. The place was packed ; the men and women sat with wooden faces, their hands folded in front of them. I tried a funny story to wake them up—not a smile could I raise. I worked on them until the sweat ran off me like rain off a roof—not an eye blinked. I had no chairman, for I like to be alone on a platform, then all the vegetables that arrive belong to the lecturer, so I could get no advice that evening. Then I grew desperate and tried pathos ; I told of death on the battle-field so realistically that I sobbed myself, but I was the only one who did—every head looked like a wooden nutmeg ; not a tear, not a movement of facial muscle. I tacked

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back to laughter—no response, not a hand clap ; nothing but dynamite would have stirred that mob.

At the end of an hour I adjourned for the usual interval. A solemn Dutchman stalked heavily into my dressing-room from the front seats and asked ponderously if anything was wrong. I said no, not that I knew of. ‘Well,’ he said, ‘we’re tired of waiting for the lecturer—has he gone to Johannesburg by mistake?’ The audience had mistaken me for the chairman and had sat me out with patience ; only about ten in the crowd could understand English. Then I remembered that for the sake of effect I had had all my bills printed in Dutch and veldt folk had come to hear a countryman ! The rest of that lecture was made up of moving pictures, whilst I was moving out of town with the night’s takings, on a horse that learnt some English before dawn.

CHAPTER XX

GREAT PEOPLE AND GREAT CITIES

I HAD always contemplated making a full chapter out of great people of my time, but when I came to sit down in cold blood to analyze the so-called 'great' whose names have filled men's mouths, I was staggered to find how few could truthfully be labelled great. By this term I mean men or women whose names will be known to mankind a hundred years hence. The last fifty years have been an era of advertisement rather than achievement, a puppet-making era, it will be known to posterity as the 'money age.'

I honestly believe I am cosmopolitan in my views in regard both to prominent men and renowned cities ; if a man's blood counts for anything, I most certainly should be, for I carry many strains : a great-grand-dame of mine, the daughter of a Scottish soldier of fortune, serving in the French

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Army, mated with a Corsican—a nice blending of opposites for a start ; since then, Irish and English have been imported into the blood, and to crown it all, I was born in Australia and educated mainly through my eyes by travel. My son has married an American lass with a strong strain of Red Indian in her blood, and I am looking forward joyously to the time when between them they give me a grandson. If that boy develops Corsican-Scots-Irish-Red Indian characteristics, he ought to be a record-breaker of some sort. If I have anything to say in regard to his future, he's going in the Army, and the Anzac lads should have a great general some day. It only needs a grandson at some future period to marry a daughter of China to make the earth circuit pretty nearly complete. Anyway, I welcome the Red Indian strain into the family, for I think highly of it.

There are various ways of registering oneself in history : it can be done by being infamous. William of the Red Hand, Kaiser of Germany, will be a notable figure to generations of our species a thousand years hence, on account of his crimes against humanity ; I am writing in no catch-penny spirit ; I have tried calmly to weigh the evidence

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for and against this ruler, and have, I think, divested my mind of the crude passions of the hour. I have never been able to understand the attitude of the English mind towards the First Napoleon ; the spleen of the British writers of that period has always appeared contemptible ; they did not and could not appreciate the towering genius of the Great Adventurer, not one of them was big enough to look above his boots ; they were nearly all vulgar, most of them cowardly, and the great majority unblushing liars. I would not approach William of the Red Hand in such a spirit ; if I could not hold the balance level I would leave the task untouched. It is my firm conviction that this monarch is a vanity-smitten maniac, and yet a man of very considerable natural attainments, a personage of great versatility ; I myself have seen him posing as art critic for his nation, as Admiral of his fleet and as commander of his army, and those three poses were only a moiety of his many posings. From boyhood he always had three figures in his mind : Cæsar, William the Norman and the Great Corsican, and I verily believe he considered himself more than the equal of the three rolled into one. Had he been born to an ordinary

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state in life, and been compelled to work his way upward through opposing ranks, I feel assured he would have achieved a certain amount of fame, but from infancy he was surrounded by panderers who ministered to a mind diseased by vanity, and fashioned him for his evil destiny. Possibly the only man who frankly took his measure and told him his limitations was Bismarck, and Bismarck was nearly a great man in the great sense; he was certainly a very big man, too big to be tolerated by the vain young monarch who could not get enough of the sun whilst resting in the Iron Chancellor's shadow. Possibly the most telling cartoon I have seen in any country was that entitled 'Dropping the Pilot,' in *Punch*; it depicted the Kaiser getting rid of Bismarck, which was the first step towards the war which has deluged Europe with blood. I do not know how the Kaiser managed to conceal his real character so long from the eyes of the statesmen whose duty it was to protect what are now known as the allied countries from a war of surprise; they may have been clever men in many ways, but they were no physiognomists. Between brow and chin-point, William of the Red Hand had his character charted in

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unmistakable characters : cruel as the grave, vain as a harlot, treacherous as a collie dog, imperious as Cæsar, a man who would accept the hospitality of a friendly monarch and sit below the salt in all good fellowship, and send his servants in the dead of night to listen at keyholes. The late King Edward of England, I think, saw William with his mask off, and understood his intention to some day force a war on Britain with the firm intent of invading the country and seizing the crown, and thereby establishing himself in history as a greater than William the Norman. The mainspring of this intent was personal vanity, not a desire to enhance the might of Germany by conquest ; he was to be the artisan, Germany only the tool. His designs upon France, Russia, the Balkan States and the Far East were intended to blazon him as a greater soldier than Napoleon, yet the Corsican's old cocked hat hanging upon two crossed sticks on any stricken field would have been more potent for victory than William's presence. He would have made an excellent colonel of cavalry, but a mountebank Field-Marshal ; the genius for war was not in him from the beginning. That he is false in all his dealings stands proven up to the

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hilt ; he never knew the meaning of truth or honour, nor true patriotism, for he would as soon turn his guns on his own workpeople and deluge German soil with home-brewed blood as he would shamble Belgians or Serbs, if the people of the Fatherland dared to disobey his imperious will. The best trait in his unlovely character is to be found in his private life ; he was never a degenerate in a sexual sense ; in that respect I hold him to be a manly man, free from the foul taint not at all uncommon amongst his Junkers. Two things have made it possible for him to become the bloodstained Blonde Beast of the twentieth century : firstly, the greed of the money kings, the merchants and manufacturers of his country, especially the steel magnates and kindred associations ; secondly, the arrogant, overbearing Junker class. In a great measure William has been, without ever dreaming of it, the puppet of these two classes ; they have used him, playing upon his insensate vanity as harpists upon a harp. In the life to come, in which all men great and small have to pay measure for measure for deeds done in the body, he will wander in terrible solitude over a sea of grinning skulls for a thousand years. Nothing that God or man

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could offer would induce me to change places to-day with the Blonde Beast of Berlin. In the end, the hatred, loathing and disgust of his own countrymen and countrywomen will follow his name until the Teutonic language is forgotten.

It is with unfeigned pleasure that I turn away from the sinister figure of the unclean German.

Where next shall I find a man who will live a little longer than the grass of the fields? Was Lord Kitchener great? Yes, in comparison with most of the men by whom he was surrounded; great as an outstanding figure in history—no. He had no imagination; he was a master of routine; he was honest; duty was his watchword; he was truthful, and without fear he possessed great capacity, but not greatness in the sense that Nelson was great. Once and once only he nearly rose to Alpine heights in his career; in that hour when he diagnosed the nature of the war that lay in front of us, when the German guard crossed the Rhine, and he called in trumpet tones to the men of Britain to muster in their millions. In that hour he hovered upon the edge of immortality; for a brief span he had the seer's vision, the prophet's mantle, but the bud did not blossom, he did not

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live up to the ideal of his own creating—it was not in him. Yet at his smallest, he was a giant amongst the host of mediocrities by whom he was pinpricked to the verge of madness. He was a sizable man.

Tolstoy was the greatest Russian of my time. He was a power for good in his own country when I was there, and had he lived until the revolutionary storm broke over his native land, he would have been a rallying point around whom much that was strongest and sanest in Russia would have focused. He was more than a writer, he was a prophet; his vision could pierce the veil, and yet he was very human. He will be a living force centuries after many men are utterly forgotten whose names are now trumpeted to the four winds of heaven. He lived and died before his time; had he come at a period when the bovine moujik mind had had time to expand, he might have made Russia the real colossus of the North. Even his worst detractors must admit that he was a milestone upon the path of human progress, a pioneer of thought, blazing trails that future generations will tread. The mother that bore him did not suffer her pangs in vain.

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Lord Rosebery was the most polished orator I ever heard upon a public platform, a master of 'charm.' I do not think he ever said a vulgar thing or used an uncouth expression, but he will never be among the immortals.

Mr. Joseph Chamberlain was the most incisive speaker I ever listened to; clear-cut and savage in his utterances, he knew how to give his enemies both the point and edge of his blade. To my mind he came nearer Pitt's size than any man of my day.

Let me turn for a little while to cities and harbours, for I grow weary of writing of men. Often have I been asked to name the city that appeared to me to be the greatest in our time. How can a man answer such a query? Cities are like women: they may charm and yet repel; they may be wonderfully fascinating, and yet not be the one to content one's soul; they may look passing fair by night light, and garish by day. It is seldom one sees one's ideal in flesh and blood or in bricks and mortar. Of all cities, there are five that dwell with me unceasingly: Constantinople, Venice, Edinburgh, Sydney and St. Petersburg—for so it was called when I knew it. In varying moods I

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love each best, just as Sydney harbour, the Bay of Naples, the Golden Horn, Rio Janeiro and the tiny harbour of the bay of Santos appeal each to me in turn. Who shall say which is the most exquisite, where all are so distractingly lovely? A blonde beauty in Regent Street may leave me gasping for want of superlatives to express what I feel as I look at her; a glowing brunette peeping shyly through a lattice-like screen of vines in some old-world Italian border town can make me laugh at my infatuation for her fair-skinned sister woman—especially as the fair sister is afar off. If you have lived most of your life in the bush or in lumber camps or on mining fields, or if your lines have been cast in prosaic commercial cities, save your money and go for a trip to Venice or Constantinople; you will have memories to carry you over the rough places of life until you die; I will not try to describe them; it would take a book to do that in each case.

Some great cities sadden me: Peking, the capital of China, did. I had read in my youth a volume dealing with Peking; the man who wrote it was a liar and the truth was afar from him; he wrote of a majestic city, full of Oriental splendour. I saw no

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splendour. Peking was in the main a vast collection of hovels filled to overflowing with coolies who had never known the joys of life. To me it was a terrible city, with poverty overflowing and heaped up. There were some splendid temples and the wall around the city was a marvel. I went to the ' Temple of God ' just outside Peking, and sat on the beautifully carved stool which the Dowager Empress had used when she went there to worship ; it stood behind a screen carved as they only know how to carve such things in China, where labour is so cheap that a mechanic can be employed to spend the best part of a lifetime on one piece of exquisite work. I love beautiful things, but I would rather see Australia swept from end to end with fire and sword than see her workmen brought to that level ; better, far better, extinction, utter extinction, than such grinding, cruel, merciless poverty. One of the greatest tasks that lies before the united democracies of the world after the war is the uplifting of the people of China in a wages and hours of labour sense ; if China is not so uplifted she will some day avenge herself by sweeping over the Western world like a flood. The chief gain I had in Peking was from my study of occultism, a

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study which has filled in all my spare time from earliest boyhood; but in the main Pekin was a terrible disappointment to me. It is not, or was not in my time, worthy of the genius of the great Chinese nation.

Tokio, the capital of Japan, is quaint beyond expression. Its wooden houses with paper walls, its exquisite gardens, its roadways decked with fruit trees that flower four times as long as fruit trees flower in any other country but never bear fruit, its tiny little fields, so richly and carefully cultivated, that look like toys yet keep families in frugal comfort, all charmed me. It is a city well worth seeing. I owe Japan, and Tokio especially, a good deal, for there also I studied the occult science and learnt that Japan's greatness rests, not upon the sword, but upon the people's faith in the spirit life. In Japan no one dies, folks just put aside their bodies as we put aside our clothing when we go to sleep; the spirit goes on with its life after what we call death, much as it did on earth; a dead (?) father can look after the honour of the family he begat, he can comfort and help. That, as I understood it, is the crux of the Shinto faith. I visited all the Shinto temples in Tokio,

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and very wonderful they are, and I have smiled at the English impudence which sent missionaries to meddle with the faith of the East.

Moscow was another city of disappointment to me. Of course I visited every spot pointed out as bearing any relation to Napoleon. I went over the Kremlin, and I sat in the seat of that mad devil Ivan the Terrible on the wall where he overlooked the massacre of all who would not worship as he worshipped. I was glad to get out of that seat to go and stand on the hill where Napoleon stood to watch Moscow burn; I should have liked to have stood there and watched the burning of Ivan the Terrible. Moscow has always been a city easily stirred by religious passions. I tried to get occult teaching there, but found nothing but gross superstition fit for the bovine minds of the drink-sodden moujiks of that day. Many of the priests were very little above the moujiks in mental capacity; lots of them believed in and practised occultism, but it was in the main mere devil-worship and money grab. Perhaps we should not be too critical. I have heard English preachers since the war started aver that if I did 'not believe in a loving God, I should roast in hell fire for

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eternity.’ If that be love, I don’t want to sample it.

London is a city that all colonials want to see. London scares me even yet ; to me it will always seem a wilderness of bricks and mortar, a place so vast that individuality scarcely seems to count. I think I have seen all its great places and its beautiful spots, and there are many such. Of all things in it, best I love Nelson’s monument ; the place I detest most is the ‘ Embankment ’ ; I passed three November nights upon it, penniless and hungry, on my first visit to London, after I had tried every newspaper I could think of for a job. I have often been miserable in the wild places of the world, but never quite so damnably wretched as upon the Thames Embankment within sight of plenty. My next visit was after the African war, when I came as a winner with a big position awaiting me, but I can never shake off the memory of that first visit to the metropolis of the Empire. I used to go and look up at Nelson’s stony face, and somehow he gave me courage and comfort.

Paris I have known under many aspects, in peace and war ; it is a very likeable city, but I

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could never learn to love it, as, for instance, I love Padua or Verona, or any of the ancient border cities of Italy; but if a man wants a month or two of the mere champagne of life, and has a little money to back his wants, by all means let him go to Paris about the time the Grand Prix is to be run; he'll be hard set to please if he does not get all the gaiety that is good for him. But best I love Paris in war time; she is like some stern matron who has laid aside her gewgaws, and with mouth firm set, faces trouble like a giantess. Paris may not be so alluring then, but she is at her noblest and her best.

Of Berlin I can say but little that is good, and I am not writing with pro-war bias. I never liked the city, it was always bourgeois, always pretentious and self-satisfied, like some fat Frau grown rich by selling offal and aping the grand lady. Her sculpture offended me, and whilst not a connoisseur, I am a lover of poetry in marble; Berlin's sculpture was grotesque in its priggish affectation of greatness. The whole city cried aloud to Heaven in its hypocrisy in terms of stone; there is nothing in its architecture to mark an era. Cologne and Brussels—ah yes, there you have cities where great architects

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have left the imprint of their undying genius. Vienna also can show you many a noble pile of buildings, and Amsterdam and nearly all the old Dutch towns will uplift the soul—if the damnable, dreary Dutch, rain-sodden climate has not washed all the soul out of you and left you as flat and featureless as the plains of Haarlem before the tulips are in bloom.

Rome and Naples are a couple of cities that failed to thrill me as I had expected to be thrilled, though, talking of thrills, the first time I visited Naples I got a thrill. I was young and had just started a crusade I still keep up, viz. 'sitting in the seats of the mighty.' There was a throne in the palace that was open to the public; a silken cord extended across the bottom of the marble stairs that led to the gorgeous seat; two soldiers were on guard there. The master of ceremonies who showed three of us—all youths from Australia—round that palace for a small fee, said Napoleon had sat there. That did my business. I had drunk in Napoleonic history and legend from my mother's dugs, and was saturated with it. My companions took the attention of the two soldiers; I took the marble steps in a bound, and sat in the

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seat of the mighty. A few minutes later I was sitting on the pavement outside. I hope if I ever sit on a throne of my own, or in a presidential chair, I will not be ejected from it so forcefully, or with such attendant ignominy.

In St. Petersburg I sat in the chair of Peter the Great, and in the chair of that unlucky Tzar who was bombed into a better world by Nihilists. Whilst in South Africa, I reposed me in the old armchair of Paul Kruger, the one-time giant of the Boer Republic. Not far from Venice, I reposed upon a marble seat, said to have been the favourite resting-place of Attila, the Hun conqueror. I have my doubts concerning the authenticity of that seat ; anyway, if it *was* Attila's, he had a precious poor idea of comfort. Dr. Johnson's chair in London has held me many a time, but did not improve my spelling. If there is in England a seat once filled by Elizabeth, I'll find it and try to sit me down there, for of all Englishwomen, Great Queen Bess attracts me most. If these lines should meet the eyes of any who know of any seats of the mighty in Britain and they have power to permit me to sit therein, I shall be grateful for a line dropped to my publisher. Rudyard Kipling's

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chair I have not sat in, though I should like to, for *there* is one of the men whose name will live, one of the great products of the age, a force, one of the very few who will be remembered when a few hundred years have rolled away, a man who should have been created Laureate of England, but was pushed aside for a respectable mediocrity. Kipling was not only a poet, but the greatest short story writer of the age; he may be elemental in his force, but the force is there; it meets you in his work like the sweep of a wind blast from the North Sea as you watch the winter's waves pile up around the North Foreland. I met him first in the capital of the old Free State, South Africa, when he was at his zenith as a workman, and at that time I do not think the world held his equal.

The United States of America, which, by the way, is a country I know well and love much, can, I think, show more first-class brain material in any and every walk of life than any other country on this planet. America can produce at this hour regiments of superbly clever men and women also, but who of this great array—with the exception of President Wilson, Edison the electrical wizard, and Chauncey Depew the orator—will leave an enduring

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name ? Big men are as plentiful there as corn-cobs, but giants—well, I did not have the good fortune to meet many of them. I would not have gone across the street to meet the mere Emperor of finance ; in many ways I saw nothing great in them. In a sporting sense America had one giant who stood head and shoulders above all competitors of his time. I refer to the wizard jockey, Tod Sloan, whom I saw ride often and spoke to more than once. What Fred Archer was to Great Britain and Tom Hales was to Australia in their day, Tod Sloan was to all the world of racing—peerless.

Trigg, who comes from somewhere in the North of England, was in my judgment the next greatest horseman to Tod Sloan of the last decade. His record may not read so well as Danny Maher's or Frank Wootton's, but as a judge of pace—and judgment of pace is half a race—Trigg was a marvel ; he just missed being amongst the immortals as a rider by the skin of his teeth ; as a rider of 'sprint' races he *is* amongst the immortals. I gravely doubt if Fred Archer, Tom Hales or Tod Sloan could have given him a pound and a beating.

Of all the American cities, I like San Francisco

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the best, for even yet, in spite of the earthquake, there lingers round it an atmosphere of the days when the West was won from the wilderness by the indomitable pluck of the most dauntless band of pioneers that any age has produced : gold seekers, Indian fighters, buffalo hunters, blazing the trails for the ranchmen and farmers and city folk who followed where they trod, holding their own by the might of their hands and hearts and heads. New York takes my breath away by its rush and rip and roar. Chicago is money mad. Philadelphia is full of charm, and the Southern cities have a quaintness that is always alluring, but somehow I cling to my first love by the Golden Gate, perhaps because it looks out over the sparkling Pacific which washes the coasts of my ain dear Anzac hame, for the waters that girdle those twin coasts whisper of a kinship that yet shall grow closer—God send it be so. In a fugitive volume like this one can only touch upon a city or a sea here and there, on a personage now and then.

Of all the monarchs of my time, I think the late King Edward of England was the most astute—a born ruler, but he came to the throne too late to make his influence felt with all its weight ; had

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his Royal Mother died fifteen years earlier, I do not think Germany would have been allowed to mass her powers for evil as Germany did; Edward, born diplomatist, would have checked the rising tide of Teuton power and fronted it with an order to cease war preparations or fight half prepared. He, of all the world's rulers, saw through William as through an open window. For fifteen years, through his absence from the throne, when he was at his best, King Edward was impotent to act according to the dictates of his master mind; in the abysmal depths of those wasted years lies hidden the tragedy of the lives of millions. Had he been granted his opportunity by the gods, I think he would have achieved things that would have sent him down in history amongst the immortals. The Kaiser dreaded his brain more than any intellect in all the chancelleries of Europe.

Now for a few brief seconds let me turn to the queen of the drama, to Sarah Bernhardt. I do not think I am taking any liberty with the English language when I say that here is a name that will live undimmed when the names of most statesmen, poets, princes and soldiers of our era have ceased to echo, not only as the greatest tragedienne

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of our time, but of all time. I never think of this overpowering genius, but memory takes me back to a personal incident which makes me smile. I was working upon a Sunday journal in Sydney when the Divine Sarah came to Australia, and I begged hard for the job of interviewing her—and got it. I could talk no French, but sat up all that night grinding away at a French phrase book. The next day the diva received me. I saw a wisp of a woman, thin and far from impressive to gaze upon, but her looks were lost in her charm of manner; there was none of the affected condescension so often met with amongst successful actresses; she was too big for condescension, and conscious of her greatness, she was royal in her simplicity of manner. She had all the winsomeness of a girl, and yet her girlhood lay long leagues behind her; but she was one who would never grow old, years counted for nothing with her, she was as old as her vitality, not an hour more or less, and her vitality permeated the room with an atmosphere that was magnetic. The first thought that flashed through my mind was, ‘What a general she would have made if she had been a man!’ She would have magnetized armies of

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soldiers into demi-gods. I stammered out my newly acquired French (?); the phrase book was in my jacket-pocket. Instantly the laughter flashed into her wonderful eyes. Then she took me to her heart, saying in English that was nearly as bad as my French :

‘We will make ze conversation in ze English, eh, Monsieur ?’

Then I had the bad taste to laugh. Swiftly she fronted me.

‘Ah, why you laugh, Monsieur ?’

‘Pardon, madam, it was your English.’

I got what was coming to me with the speed of a rapier thrust, for this woman’s wits were always burning.

‘Merci, monsieur, you laugh at my English, but *your* French, he make *me* weep,’ and born actress that she was, she forced the tears to fill her eyes and overflow.

But she was wondrous kind to me, an unknown scribbler, kind as I have invariably found the really great to be; it is the ‘poodles’ of every profession who are snappish and nasty, the strong are sure of themselves, and are always tolerant. She talked of her art, illustrating certain phrases

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by movement. And then I understood her power ; she crossed the room like a tigress, swiftly, with every fibre of her being quivering with pent-up passion, yet she betrayed no sign of hurry, the machinery did not creak ; she stood rigid, her hands hanging by her side clenched, every emotion crossing and recrossing her face, changing it so that it looked as if one mask after another had been placed over her features and withdrawn by an invisible hand ; she walked to her chair, and every step was eloquent of a woman defeated, of purpose frustrated, and the anguish upon her face, the heaving of her bosom, spoke of a heart breaking to the bursting point. In a moment she was on her feet again, joyous, care-free, a wonder-woman, bubbling with laughter, every action, every expression portraying a happy, careless, joyous nature ; the room seemed to vibrate mirth, merriment, and all the wonder phrases of unstinted joy. A magician's wand, the wand of her own unapproachable genius, touched her. She was a sad, pitiful, tender woman, her life in ruins at her feet, and yet strong to help others. Will she *live* ? If she does not, what is human fame worth ? She has visited nearly every land, and conquered all. Now,

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maimed by the loss of a limb, she is in far-away Cuba. Resting, eh? Not for an hour; crowned with honours and with years, maimed and broken in health, she is working for money to keep her hospital going in bonny France, that some of the warriors who have fought for freedom may suffer less. The world has never seen her like before, nor ever will again. There has only been one Napoleon; the earth will only see one Bernhardt.

I had hoped to say something concerning a country I love and a people I honour in this book of my knock-about life, but New Zealand is a land that needs a book in itself, and a passing mention is in a sense an insult. Only a little spot, but the home of heroes, a land where democracy has reached the highest level the followers of Demos have ever attained, a dream of beauty and a joy for ever; that is a thumb-nail sketch of New Zealand. The land never bred a snake, nor the women a sneak. Some day I am going back to the 'King Country' to see if any of my old Maori friends are left alive; to live for a few months in a state of nature as the Maoris live, and renew my youth, and grow closer to God, whose voice is on the whispering winds and in the rustling grass; to drink again the melody of

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bough rustling against bough and leaf kissing leaf in the Kauri pine forests ; to bathe in the hot lakes and laugh with the black-eyed, brown-skinned girls of the milk-white teeth ; to fish for eight-pound trout (snigger, if you will, over the weight, ye men of English streams and Scottish lochs), to cast a line for salmon, and to shoot the wild pigs in the undergrowth, and be—a man again, please God.

Now I must draw this chapter to a close with a few lines concerning a woman whose little finger was thicker than the loins of any man this century has produced, a woman fit to have mated with Attila, Alexander or Cæsar ; had she lived in earlier times and mated with the Great Adventurer who came from Corsica, the world would have been their footstool and kings and kaisers their lacqueys : the late Dowager Empress of China. She was on the throne when I first visited China, and she ruled with a rod of iron. My first-hand knowledge of this towering genius, who is so little known to the Western world, was but slight. The late Dr. Morrison, correspondent of *The Times*, ought to have written a book about her before he died ; perhaps he knew too much, for Morrison, who was an Australian, was easily the foremost journalist

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of the last fifty years, a man who went to look for his 'copy,' even if it lay between the lion's paws. The Dowager Empress knew him well and respected him as she respected few men, for he was truth personified, and his cold, unswerving, steadfast courage which ice could not freeze nor hell melt, appealed to the woman who from girlhood had walked with the angel of death brushing against her elbow, walked and never wavered. Bought from a slave-pen in the open market to be a toy to titivate the jaded tastes of a worn-out Emperor, she lived to marry the ruler whose puppet she had been intended for, and to bear him a son. When at first she entered the Royal *ménage*, a concubine amongst a company of others bought and brought like herself, to cheer an old man's fancy, she was like a stray wolf near a wolf-pack. Her beauty roused their jealousy, and she was beautiful with the weird, witching beauty sometimes found in the women of her race: her mouth, that was so often to utter the death sentence in days to come, was at that time like a pomegranate bud, with the trick of a smile in every curve; her complexion was like alabaster polished by a cunning artificer; her eyes deep wells of silence. It is said of her

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that she had that most witching thing in a woman, a soft, low, melodious voice, with a caress in all its tender tones. Her little hands showed the blue veins through the clear skin of perfect physical health, and though petite of figure, she was a model of grace and strength, a woman who never wearied. Physically, she was one who stood alone amongst the four hundred and odd millions of her country, but it was the brain in that little head that marked her out for majesty. Her wit taught her when little more than a child what millions of grown and growing women to-day are doing their best to forget—it taught her that sex and the charm of sex is woman's most powerful weapon in life; knowing this, she used all Oriental art and knowledge—and it is great—to keep herself physically perfect; health meant lasting beauty, beauty allied to wit meant the key to power. It was long before she caught her lord the Emperor's eye, for he had many wives as well as concubines, as is, and ever has been and ever will be, the Oriental way, which is not a thing for westerners to sneer at. Sexual morality is very much a matter of geography: what would be immoral in London would be perfectly moral in Constantinople;

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and those women hedged the Emperor round with jealous barriers. She was not idle ; she had from the first all the arts of court intrigue at her fingers' ends ; it was born in her ; such things are not learnt in the slave-pen ; destiny had marked her for its own, and the forces that wait on destiny hedged her round like an invisible guard ; she broke up every cabal amongst the concubines, and made her rivals her followers—any woman will know how hard that task must have been—and when at last she found favour in the sight of her lord the Emperor, she was fronted by the hate and hostility of the haughty wives ; she played chess with them, moving one this way and one that, playing one against the other, until she became a wife, then she put her foot upon them all. The hour she became an Empress she had the political forces against her, and the great conservative families ; not one moment of any hour was her position secure or her life safe ; she played party against party, faction against faction—and won. Always she was the central figure of the grim game, and she never lost her head or her nerve, she never cringed to any storm or ran away from any peril to herself ; she grew so used to attempts

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upon her life that death must have grown to be a commonplace idea with her. So brilliantly did she plan and scheme that in the end she had all parties fighting one against the other to be first in her favour. The Emperor died and she became Queen Regent and custodian of her son who was heir to the throne, for the Emperor had left no other issue, a fact which made all the other wives hate her with an unending hate. As Empress the wonder woman ruled China as it had never been ruled; factions were stirred up against her and rebellions fomented; then the tiger in her came to the surface; the executioner's sword was busy from the rising to the setting of the sun for many days and for many weeks. I have held the sword of the grand executioner in my hands—a great blade of tempered steel, three feet nine inches long and five inches broad, three-eighths of an inch wide at the back, razor-edged in front, a good piece of steel—to avoid. When the years were fat she stored up food against the lean years; she combated disease, famine and floods with indomitable perseverance and wondrous skill, and her reward was countless attempts upon her life by her foes who never forgave her her humble origin.

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I saw her only once, just for a few fleeting seconds. It was on an occasion when she was going to worship at the Temple of God. The streets leading from the palace gates to the Temple were cleared of the populace, the shops and booths were closed ; in my capacity of special correspondent I was permitted to stand in the street close to the palace gate. She came forth in her palanquin, with gorgeous silken blinds closely drawn ; soldiers bore the palanquin on their shoulders ; her guards, all men of superb physique, thronged round her, a grim-faced body of men who would have obeyed any order from her, even to the hewing in pieces of their own fathers, for it was typical of her genius that those whom she attracted to her became fanatics in her service. The Royal entourage made a gorgeously brilliant spectacle in the midst of its drab surroundings ; no one who has not seen a Chinese high official in his court robes can begin to imagine what a blaze of colour is presented to the eyes ; silks of every shade flashed in the sunlight, and priceless silk at that. I kept my eyes upon the Royal palanquin, and had the reward of my steadfastness ; one of the curtains was drawn aside by a thin, tapering, wrinkled hand, and quickly



My family motto: 'I follow my Star.'
A. G. Hales in Italy, 1918.

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drawn again, but not before I had seen a face that was unforgettable, an old woman's face, lovely still in spite of years and care : a complexion like old ivory, and every feature set like stone ; the lips were bloodless, but the eyes were the eyes of one who had sent thousands to their death and had looked unflinchingly on the workings of countless schemes for the assassination of herself and child ; the eyes of a mighty ruler and lawmaker, who had watched more than once whilst the tide of her greatest river rolled onward, covered from bank to bank with the dead who had died for or against her ; eyes that had looked without blenching upon the work of seven great plagues that had left writhing myriads to die without hope of help. That she had pitied and done all that human power could do, when those plagues were devastating the populace, even her enemies admitted, aye, and that she had set her minions an example of amazing courage by going where the very air stank of death and pestilence, all men in the East know. Small wonder her eyes looked as they did, for out of their sombre depths seemed to gleam the tragedies of ten thousand years. I had bared my head when she came through the palace gate ;

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I kept it reverently bared until long after she and her escort had passed out of sight, for I knew that I had been in the presence of one whose instep was higher than the heads of any of the so-called great this last hundred years has produced. Of such stuff was Elizabeth of England, and Catherine the Great of Russia, and perhaps Cleopatra fashioned, but from the beginning of time earth has not seen many of her mould.

There is one other case in history which marches almost on all-fours with the life of this mightiest of modern women. A Russian captive girl of half-Tartar breed taken by the Turks in the fifteenth century was sold from a slave-pen to the chief eunuch of the Sultan Sulieman who was then the terror of Europe and the East. Her name was Roxelana. She outwitted all the other concubines and wives of the Sultan, and practically forced by the magnetism of sex, mother wit and beauty the wolfish tyrant and conqueror to marry her and make her Sultana. She was, if possible, more wolf than her mate and waded through blood to power, in which respect she was unlike the late Dowager Empress of China who only killed in self-defence or in defence of her son. Possibly

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such happenings could only occur in lands where Asiatic blood makes the sex power so great that all else is subordinate to it, for after all the Turks were a branch of the Chinese nation at the beginning before they took in the sixth century the name we know them by to-day. Prior to the time when they erupted from China they were well known as the Hiung-no; when they first styled themselves Turks they did not have a Sultan but a Khan. Why they styled themselves Turks and what the name signifies I have not yet been able to discover. Like the Huns they have always believed in force. They came into Europe at the point of the sword, at the very spot where the great new nation, the Anzacs, won imperishable fame, viz. at Gallipoli; did it too by a deed of astounding valour. Unlike the Germans they can be ruled body and soul through their sexual senses, for women who are nominally merely their mistresses are often the masters (?) of their Sultans.

It had been my intent to close this chapter with a few sketches of politicians; I say politicians advisedly, for there have been few statesmen since Bismarck, Gladstone and Disraeli died. Another fault of our era: the newspapers take a piece of

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plastic mud, knead it and mould it, bully it and slobber over it in turns, and call it great, as if anything a modern newspaper can make *could* be great. But I have no heart in me to write of such after dwelling upon such a huntress of the gods as she of whom I have written. There are no giants amongst them, East or West; we have no more, not one; they are all alike in the main, some a little worse than the others, but pancake politicians all of them, ready at a moment's notice to turn over when done brown on one side. Pancake politicians, did I style them? 'Tis an insult to a useful kitchen utensil, but I may not use the name of the only domestic utensil that would properly fit the heads of most of them, though the alliteration would be just as euphonious.

Of Egypt I should have written a good deal, both in regard to gold mining, religion and irrigation, but how can a person compress a lifetime into one volume? I am afraid I have missed many of my life's most interesting details as it is; still, I have never been a traveller in the ordinary sense of the word, I have just knocked about the world without method or design, except to learn life's lessons first-hand. From Egypt I obtained a goodly

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store of knowledge concerning things occult, but if I commenced upon that theme I should double the size of this present volume. Egypt—well, some day when the itch of movement has worn out of me, I shall write a book on that land of mystery which to-day is only half awake; some day her slumbers shall cease, and then—but that belongs to the book that is to be.

CHAPTER XXI

COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE

I SUPPOSE I ought to have told of my courtship and marriage early in this narrative, but every item has been jotted down as the fancy took me—nothing in its proper sequence. I was married when very young, but it was probably the only sensible thing I ever did do.

I went into a little chapel in South Australia one Sunday morning, not because I was religiously inclined but because it was awfully hot outside. Seated at the organ, I saw the most beautiful girl I had ever seen, or have seen, and I made up my mind, with the audacity of youth, that I would woo and win her. I borrowed a Bible from a deacon. During the service I tore out a fly-leaf and scribbled a note to the dainty organist, and as she came out of church slipped it into the hand of a little girl,

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bidding her give it to the organist. She glanced at it, looked me calmly in the eyes, tore my note to little shreds and walked past me as if I were made of mud. I took lodgings in the district and became a regular chapel-goer; I even got into the choir, but soon got out again at the firm and urgent request of the choir leader, who said he wanted folks in his choir who could make a 'joyful' noise before the Lord. He even hinted that members of the congregation who had to come from a distance had been compelled to leave their horses at home since I had taken up singing.

In spite of this I secured an introduction to the organist. Her father was a man of Devon, a giant of a man, slow to anger, but when roused a bad man to fall foul of. He was a mighty man of his hands, one of the fine old pioneer stock, who blazed the trails of progress in South Australia in the infancy of the State. He had been a gold hunter, and a successful one, and had enough to live on all his days in comfort. The organist was his ewe lamb, the youngest of a big family. She was as slender as a lily and as graceful as a fawn.

When the old man found me hanging over the orchard fence, it was not his fault he did not leave

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me hanging on an orchard tree. He did not think the man was born who was fit to touch the hem of her garment ; just what he thought of me, he let me know in fine, rich Devon terms, and I knew in my heart the old pioneer was right, but I would not give up the maid. Strangely enough I had a staunch friend in her sweet old mother.

‘Don’t be hard on the boy, Will,’ she said ; ‘you were no saint when I married you ;’ and first to last she was my friend, God bless her. But the great, gaunt old man never had any use for me, and would almost as soon have seen his dainty lass in her shroud as in my arms.

‘Go your way and get the devil that’s in you tamed by hard knocks, you darned young hawk !’ he flung at me, and I kept out of his way ; but I met the lass for all that.

Now the old pioneer had one weakness : he loved to meet his old cronies of the goldfields every Saturday night in a certain hostel and live over again the stern, rough years of toil and struggle when they risked their lives for the yellow metal. Some were wealthy, some were poor, but all were men. He was never a drinking man, but on those convivial evenings he would carry home a glass or

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two under his belt, and he would whistle blithely as he faced homewards.

I wanted to stand well with him, and Satan put it into my head to turn that Saturday night gathering to my own account, so I hired two fellows of the baser sort to waylay him as he jogged joyfully to meet the silver-haired woman who always, wet or fine, waited for him.

On the night appointed, I hid behind a tree at the arranged spot, ready to spring to the rescue and help the old lion ; my loafers lurked in the shade of a wall. He came in the starlight—a grand figure of an old warlock, just merry enough to feel the blood bounding in his veins. The fellows made a rush. He braced his broad back to the wall and felling one fool with a blow, he seized the other round the waist and, with an ancient Devon wrestling trick, dashed him down upon his fallen mate, and his voice rang out in a roar of battle.

I sprang to the rescue — for this was my golden opportunity. As I came, he mistook me for another foe, and with a trick of his foot he swept my legs from under me, and as I fell against the wall he took me in the stomach with his fist—

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it was my golden opportunity ; pray God I may not meet with such another !

I threw up everything I had in the world, as I knelt there, except my determination to get the lass—I clung to that. My two scamps fled, but I could not. Explanations followed, and when I told him I had come to rescue him he was full of wrath and threatened to kick me to Port Adelaide, and that was eight miles away.

‘ You rescue me ! ’ he growled as he shook an arm, like an oak bough, in my face. ‘ You cub ! I could break you in half with a blow, old as I am.’ Then he gave a great laugh, and pushing me aside as if I had been a piece of fly paper, he strode home to tell a silver-haired woman and a brown-haired maid of the doings of the night.

I determined to go away to a fresh country, to seek for fortune, and the sweet maid did the most foolish thing of all her life, for she went in secret with me to a manse on the side of Mount Lofty and married me to keep me straight.

We parted at the manse gate and I never saw her for a year ; then she went a-wandering with me in many climes, and, in the end, the shadows fell around her amidst an alien breed on South

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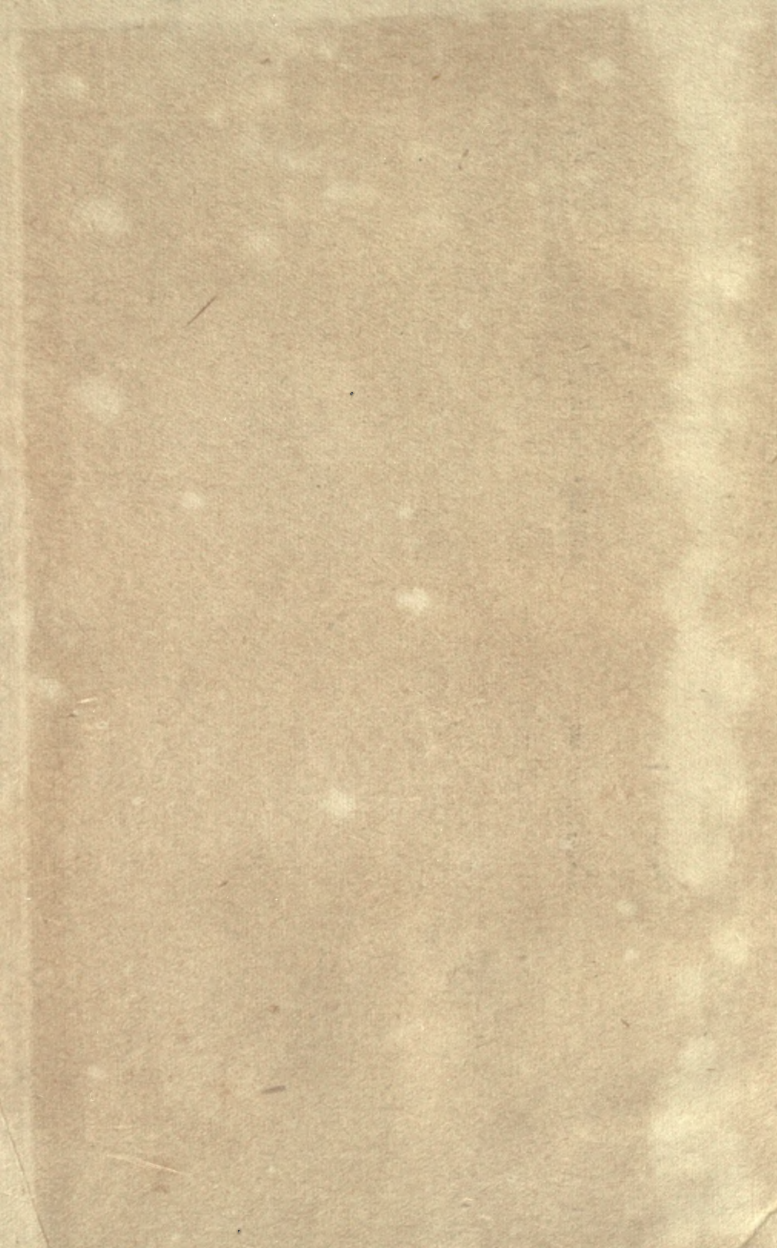
American soil—shadows that will never lift from my soul until I step within them, and few men will welcome them more gladly, though to the end I shall try to give the world a smile. Now I think it is time I began to do things with my life. I have garnered a good crop of knowledge of many sorts and it would be a sorry thing if I did not put it to some use. I have not used the gifts the gods gave me in the past as I should have used them, and to me my life seems strangely empty of achievements worth while. But the splendour of strong manhood is with me, the seed time is past and I am bracing my soul for the harvest, and the watchword of my autumnal labours shall be labour, duty and service, not ambition.

There lie big things for real men to achieve in the days that are swiftly coming, and may the high gods make me big enough for the task I have mapped out for myself.

FINIS.







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Hales, Alfred Greenwood
My life of adventure

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